

T H E
C O N Q U E S T
O F
C A N A A N:

I N W H I C H

The NATURAL and MORAL STATE of its
INHABITANTS;

The CHARACTER of their CONQUERORS;

W I T H

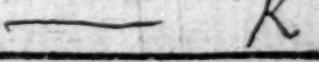
The Manner and Design of their Conquest,

A R E C O N S I D E R E D.

In a Series of LETTERS from a FATHER
to his SON.

Intended for the Amusement and Instruction
of YOUTH.

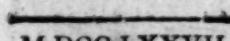
By JOHN MARTIN.



L O N D O N:

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 M.DCC.LXXVII.

C A N A D A



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LETTER I.

MY SON,

THE pleasures your infancy afforded me, except only what memory has preserved, are now no more.

As infancy and childhood gradually withdrew, your next state, as you thought, with lingering steps approached. And now it is present, what is youth? Is it not also, vanity? Allow me to say, this state is as much the subject of your father's fear, as he perceives it to be the subject of your ambition. With many a wishful look he surveys his tender plant growing where storms and tempests howl. And, contemplating your present situation, with many an anxious thought he often beholds his child, his only child, and in the fulness of his heart is heard to say, "God be gracious to thee my son!"

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IT is with pleasure I observe, you have a taste for reading. This, if corrected and refined, may be productive of real and lasting advantage; but if perverted, like a consumptive habit, may gradually corrupt the springs of life, make your very existence an insupportable burden to yourself, as well as distressing to your friends, and terminate in one general mass of corruption. However, between natural and moral corruption there is among other distinctions one, which it may be proper to mention. Natural corruption prevails without our consent, and is not the less predominant because we dread and detest it. But moral corruption is a depravity of mind and manners; a depravity of the understanding, will and affections, of conscience and of conduct; it can never therefore, prevail contrary to our own consent, nor be predominant where it is abhorred. On this account, I am not so much alarmed at the thought of what you may happen to read, as with the fear of what you may possibly approve.

You will not from hence infer, that, it is a matter of indifference with me, what books you read. Far from it: I only mean to inform you, if you do yourself no harm, you need not fear receiving moral injury from any other person.
“ Who is he that will harm you, if you be a follower

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follower of that which is good?" Sinners may entice, and peculiar providences distress you, but moral injury is but another word for moral blame; which, the means of prevention and cure strongly suppose.

As you are already the subject of moral evil, and conscious of it, whatever has a tendency to manifest its true nature, or check its progress, and lead you to him who only can pardon and subdue it, must be worthy your notice.—The lives of the virtuous and vicious, it is well known, have been happily subservient to such ends: persuaded of this, and that I cannot write any thing which your regard for me will suffer you to read with inattention, I am encouraged to fulfil my promise of giving you an historical view of the Conquest of Canaan; in which characters almost of every kind will be introduced, and virtue and vice, will appear in shapes as various.—I know, you have frequently read this subject as it is related in the sacred page, and some of the inimitable odes composed on this occasion. But as yet, you have attended to this history, only in detached parts, with the prejudices and passions of a child; I want you now, to read it in a connected view, accompanied with the reflections of a father, who may be supposed to have made some observations, which you are yet incapable

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of making for yourself. I shall, therefore, collect and arrange, such materials as appear proper for this purpose, in a series of letters for your service; but I must premise one thing before I proceed.

I SHALL, in writing the following letters, suppose, not only that your knowledge is what might be expected in one of your years, but, that you wish to increase it every day. Your present state, like the past, is fleeting; it is therefore, not my intention so to please the youth, as to disgust the man. If, in some of my letters, I am not clearly understood, I wish you to remember, my design in writing these letters is, to exercise your genius, as well as to accommodate myself in general, to the measure of your present capacity. It is more eligible that you should rise, than, that I should fall; that you should be a man, than I a boy. Were every thing I said, easy to be comprehended, I fear it would prove a temptation to pride; and, if the greater part were not so, it might prove too severe a trial to your patience. This mixed manner of writing is, what our common parent has adopted in his word. There, our pride is mortified, our patience exercised, and, at the same time, our humility and diligence abundantly rewarded.

ALLOW me to add, that foreseeing my citations from the word of truth will be frequent, it being

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the best voucher I can produce to authenticate the substance of the following narrative, you must not always expect where quotations are so numerous, that chapter and verse will be mentioned. In general, I shall only distinguish the words I may see occasion to introduce from the sacred records, by marking them with inverted commas, and, by referring you sometimes, to the historian, the prophet, or apostle, whose words I may introduce. My design in adopting this method is, that you may be the less interrupted in reading these letters, and the more diligent in searching the scriptures to "see whether things are so." Wherein I avail myself of the labours of others, by extracting any thing from their works, or by following their judgment in any matter of importance, besides general acknowledgments, sometimes, immediately following the assistance they afford me, a more particular account may be expected in my last letter; and, as in writing to you, I shall take the liberty to transpose, abridge, and blend their words with my own, as it may best answer the design I have in view, such acknowledgments appear to me, the most eligible, and respectful. With such assistance, for your amusement and edification, but principally to promote the latter, I venture on a work, which,

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on any other plan, I should not, I hope, have the arrogance to attempt.

IN my next, I shall enter on a description of that delightful country which was once “like the garden of the Lord;” but which now, and for many ages, has been, in a comparative view, “like the vineyard of the slothful.”

I am, &c.

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LETTER II.

I NEED not tell you, that the country on which the following scenes of action in general were exhibited, is in that part of the world which is called Asia. Its most antient name is Canaan, or Chanaan.—Canaan was the fourth son of Ham, and Ham was the youngest son of Noah; who acted, as Moses informs us, a most shameful part to his aged father. But, when Noah awoke from “his wine, and knew what his youngest son Ham had done unto him,” who perhaps was guilty of something more irreverent and indecent, than we have yet conceived, he said, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren.” From him, who, as some suppose, was born in the ark, and concurred with Ham in insulting Noah, the country of which I am speaking, was first called, Canaan. It is thought he lived and died, in the country called after his own name. And formerly, they shewed his tomb, which was, if we may credit what some have asserted, twenty-five feet long, in a cave of the mountain of the Leopards, not far from Jerusalem. But such romantic tales deserve our censure, not our credit; and in reading profane his-

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tory, or the works of common historians on scripture history, you cannot be too careful in distinguishing truth from falsehood. In future ages, this country, like most others, was known by different names: as, the Land of Promise, the Land of God, the Land of Israel, the Holy Land: and sometimes, by way of pre-eminence, The Land. It has been also called, Palestine, from the Palestines, or Philistines, who possessed a great part of it; and Judea, from Judah, whose tribe was the most considerable of the twelve, and possessed the finest and most fertile part of the whole land, according to Jacob's prophecy concerning that tribe. The Christians, as well as the Jews, have dignified it with the title of Holy Land; partly on account of the manifest and singular blessings it had received from divine providence; and partly on account of its metropolis being made the centre of God's worship, and his peculiar habitation; but the christians much more for its being the place of our Saviour's birth, the scene of his preaching, and manifold miracles, especially the place in which he accomplished the great work of our redemption. As to the name, Judea, it was not called by it, till after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity; though it had been stiled, long before, the kingdom of Judah, in opposition to that

that of Israel, which revolted from it under Jeroboam, in the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. But, after the return from captivity, the tribe of Judah, the chief, and indeed the only one, that made any figure, settling at Jerusalem, and in the countries adjacent, and by degrees spreading themselves through the country, the name of Jehudah, and Jehudim, quickly extended itself to all the rest.

As to the other names by which profane writers have called it, such as Syria, Palestina-Syria, Cœlesyria, Iduma, Idumea, and Phœnicia, or Phœnice; they were only given out of contempt to the Jewish nation, which they did not account worthy to be distinguished by any but the most common names of those noted provinces, and of which, they looked upon them only as an obscure and inconsiderable part.

THE boundaries of this country are, by the authors of the Universal History, from whom the preceding account of its various names is taken, thus described. It was inclosed on the west, by the Mediterranean; and, on the east, by the lake Asphaltites, the Jordan, and the sea of Tiberias, or Galilee, and the Samachonite lake; to the north it had the mountains of Libanus, or rather, of Antilibanus, or the province of Phœnicia; and to the south, that of Edom, or Idumea; from

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which it was likewise parted by another ridge of high mountains. But you are to remember, that, these are the boundaries of the land of promise properly so called; exclusive of that part which belonged to the two tribes and an half, on the other side Jordan, and which was called Peræa, and the land, or kingdoms of Og, Sihon, &c.

THE extent of this land, is variously settled by geographers; some supposing it no more than about 170 or 180 miles in length, from north to south—and about 140 in breadth, from east to west, where broadest, as it is towards the south; and but 70 where narrowest, as it is towards the north. But from the latest and most accurate maps, it appears to extend near 200 miles in length, and near 80 in breadth, about the middle; and 10 or 15, more or less, where the land is extended and contracted.

HAVING given you the names, boundaries, and extent of the land of Canaan, I shall just mention, in one view, the most remarkable divisions to which the whole land has been subject; and then, relieve your attention from this unenter-taining, but necessary ground-work of the following history.

AT first, it seems, the land was divided by its *antient inhabitants* into so many toparchies, or little petty states, each of which had its chief, or king; and, in this respect, it was something like

Like the antient state of Britain, during the time of the Saxon heptarchy. After the conquest by the *children of Israel*, Judea in its largest sense, was divided into maritime and inland, and into mountainous and champaign; and, as the river Jordan ran across it, it was again divided into Judea on this side, and Judea beyond Jordan. But the most considerable division is, that, which was made, according to the *divine appointment*, among the twelve tribes, by lot, to prevent all murmuring and discontent among that stubborn people; and of which, two tribes and an half were seated beyond Jordan, and the rest, on this side. The next remarkable division, was made by king *Solomon*; who divided his kingdom into 12 provinces, or districts, under peculiar officers, each of which, was to supply the king with provisions for his household in their turn; that is, each for one month of the year. But the most fatal division was made, under his imprudent son *Rehoboam*, when by the divine permission, ten of the twelve tribes revolted from him, under the influence of *Jeroboam*, who became head of this new monarchy, stiled the kingdom of *Israel*, in opposition to that of *Judah*; the title by which the dismembered kingdom of *Rehoboam* was known from that time downwards. Under the second temple, this distinction lasted a considerable

nable time, and the same bloody hatred and hostilities continued between these two kingdoms; that of Israel, from its capital city, being called Samaria; and the inhabitants of this kingdom were a mixture of the old Israelites, and those sent thither by the kings of Assyria, after their conquest of it, till they were subdued by the Maccabees, and their metropolis destroyed. Under the *Romans* it began to be divided again into petty states, called tetrarchies and toparchies; some greater than others: the largest were those of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, upper and lower; the smaller those of Geraritica, Saronia, and some others of less note; all which were on this side the Jordan: those on the other side, were Gilead, Peræa, Gaulonitis, Auranitis, Batanea, and Decapolis. Josephus mentions another division, made in *Gabinius's* time, into five districts, or as he styles them, *συνέδρια*, or councils, agreeable to the Roman manner; and these were Jerusalem, Jericho, and Sephoris, on this side Jordan; and Gadaris and Amathus, on the other; but these did not last long. In process of time, during the reigns of the *christian emperors*, it was divided afresh into Palæstina prima, Palæstina secunda, and Palæstina tertia; or Salutaris, which included the far greater part, if not the whole country. Waving all other divisions and

changes,

changes, that happened to this land, under the northern *Barbarians*, *Saracens*, &c. I shall only mention the present state and division of it under the *Turks*. And the whole country of Palestine, is said to be now reduced to a province, under the bassaship of Scham, or Damascus, who has seven subgovernors under him, who are stiled according to the different places of their residence, the subgovernor of Damascus, of Jerusalem, &c. And so much for the most remarkable divisions to which the land of Canaan has been subject, from first to last.

ONLY let me observe, the division that principally prevailed in the time of our Saviour, was that which subsisted under the Romans, to whom the land of Judea was then subject, and by whom it was divided into the provinces of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. These provinces, in different respects, excelled, and consequently were inferior to each other. With respect to antiquity, Galilee has the preference ; Judea next ; Samaria, in a provincial view, being of much later date. In extent, Judea takes the lead ; being on both sides the Jordan ; Galilee, upper and lower, is the second ; and Samaria the most inconsiderable of the three. As to honour, Judea again asserts her superiority, on account of Jerusalem her capital ; Samaria next asserts her claim, without

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without contention; for Galilee, though the most antient, seems to be conscious of her meanness. Yet out of Galilee, whence no good thing was expected, came Jesus Christ, and most, if not all his apostles.—But it is much more desirable to be an honour to the place where we were born, or live, than to have no other honour except what we receive from it. In point of safety from foreign invasions, Samaria, the middle province, was most secure; Judea next; and Galilee least. But in fruitfulness, Galilee exceeds; Samaria follows; and Judea, without controversy, gives up the claim to both.—You may form a general idea of these provinces from what is said concerning them in the fourth of John. The Evangelist mentioning the travels of our Saviour, says, “He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.” And adds, “He must needs go through Samaria.” Judea, where our Saviour then was, was the southern, and Galilee the northern province; Samaria lay between them; so that in order to go from the former to the latter, his passing through Samaria, in the common course of travelling, was unavoidable.

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LETTER III.

WHEN we enter a country we never saw before, the prospects it affords, and what it produces, naturally engage our attention. The prospects of this country, I shall take some notice of in the present letter, and its produce in the following.

VALLEYS standing thick with corn, meadows covered with cattle, vineyards laden with fruit, mountains almost of every shape and size, barren and fertile; covered and bare; plains extensive and delightful, forests and deserts romantic, wild, vast, and mixed; with brooks, rivers, lakes and seas; presented such scenes to him who saw Canaan in its former glory, as at once captivated his attention and commanded his applause.

THE principal valley was that, which was afterwards called the Valley of Blessing. Besides this, of no inconsiderable note, were what the Israelites called, the valleys of Siddim, of Shaveh, of Salt, of Jezreel, of Mamre, of Rephaim, of Jehoshaphat, of Hinnom, of Zeboim, of Achor, of Bochim, and of Elah.—Among the mountains

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tains of eminence were Lebanon, Hermon, Tabor, Carmel, Olivet, Calvary, or Golgotha, Moriah and Gihon. From one of these mountains, mount Tabor, we are told, the traveller yet enjoys one of the noblest prospects that can be imagined; especially of many places famed in sacred writ; such as the hills of Samaria and Engedi, on the south; on the east and north east, those of Gilboa and Hermon; and at the foot of it, the cities of Naïm and Endor; and on the south west, mount Carmel. We have here likewise a view of the sea of Tiberias, and the town of Saphet, situate on a very high mountain, besides that of a large plain it commands all around.

THERE were several famed plains in this country; the two most considerable of which are, that properly so called, through the midst of which the river Jordan runs; which is computed to be nearly 150 miles in length, and extending northward, according to Josephus, from the city of Scythopolis, on the sea of Tiberias, quite to the Asphaltite lake. A great part of this large tract is called in the New Testament, the land, or region about Jordan; otherwise the wilderness of Jordan; that is, comparatively with some other of the more delightful parts of it:—the other is styled the great plain of Esdraeon, or great plain, and valley of Jezreel, the fields of Esrela,

and

and the plain of Legion ; the first of which names it had from the capital city Jezreel, or Esdrelon, and reached, from Scythopolis to mount Carmel.

—Besides these two, which are the most remarkable plains in all Palestine, we may add, that the whole coast from mount Carmel, down to the southernmost borders of it, towards Idumea, is altogether a plain level ground, excepting here and there some small and gentle hills, or sandy heaps. The plain of Sharon, is supposed to be the northern part of this great plain, and the southern part of it was called, Sephelah, or the plain. The plain of Jericho, though rather a part of the great plain, is likewise much celebrated in scripture for its fine palm-trees, its balm shrub, as well as for its famed rose and rose-tree ; with which the whole plain was said to be almost covered.—The other plains are too inconsiderable to be mentioned.

OF deserts and forests, which were sometimes called wildernesses, there were many in this country ; of which, some were horrible, (especially that in which Jesus was led up of the spirit to be tempted of the devil) and others, when the Jews possessed it, as delightful. Many of them were then inhabited, and surrounded by cities and villages, rich, and well peopled ; and, indeed, there were but few cities, which had not some desert,

desert, according to the scripture idiom, belonging to it, for feeding their cattle; so that the word commonly meant no more than a land, or tract, that bore neither corn, wine, nor oil; but was left to its natural production; and generally abounded with thyme, marjoram, sage, and other aromatic herbs.—The deserts of Arnon, Ziph, Kadesh, Mahon, or Maon, Tekoah, Bezer, Bozra, Gibeon, or Gabaa, were among the most remarkable wildernesses we meet with in Canaan; but besides these, there were others of less note, which were likewise denominated from the cities to which they belonged. It is said, also, that the mountainous tract from Jericho to Scythopolis, was quite barren and uninhabited; and most of the space along the Jordan, from the sea of Tiberias to the Asphaltite lake.—To these, may be added, the forests of Hareth, Lebanon, and Bethel.

You are to observe, however, though mountains and plains, rivers, lakes and seas, remain in every age nearly the same, this is not the case with deserts and forests; which are much more subject to be increased or diminished. You will remember also, that in giving this view of ancient Canaan, in general, I make use of scripture names; and, as these are more familiar to you, and sufficient to answer my purpose, they have

have deservedly the preference ; not to say, how difficult it would be in some cases, to make use of any other.

THE seas which aggrandize, variegate, and enliven the prospects which this country affords, are five. The first, and indeed the only one which we should now call by that name, is the Mediterranean ; called by the sacred writers, the Great Sea, the Salt Sea, the Sea of the Philistines, and also the Hinder Sea, or Sea behind one, from its situation with respect to the land. Besides this, there were the Dead Sea, called also from its situation, the East Sea, the Sea of Sodom, the Sea of the Desert, and the Sea of the Plain : the sea of Tiberias, or Galilee, through which the river Jordan runs, and supplies it with fresh water : the Samachonite Sea, or Lake, near the city of Dan ; and the Sea of Jazer ; which was but a small lake near the city of that name.

THE rivers which adorn the scene are the Jordan ; the Arnon, Jabok, and Cherith, on the other side Jordan ; the Sorec, Kishon, Bosor, Belus, the brook of Jezreel, which falls into the Jordan near Scythopolis, and some others of less note. The Jordan seems to be next in dignity to the Nile. Its source is now said to be from the famous lake of Phiala, about ten miles north of that of Samachon. It appeared so considerable compared with the other

rivers of Canaan, that it was sometimes called by way of emphasis, *the river*. Its course after it has taken its second rise from the Panion, for, from its first rise to this where it emerges out of the earth, it runs about 120 furlongs under ground, its course after thus emerging out of the earth, is mostly southward, bending a little toward the west: after a run of about ten or twelve miles, it carries its waves quite through the Samachonite lake, whence, after a course of about eighteen or twenty miles more, exclusive of its windings, it enters into the sea of Tiberias on the north side of it, and comes out again on the south side, at a small distance from the city of that name: it thence continues its course still south west, through a plain and desert of about sixty miles more, and falls into the Asphaltite lake, mentioned above. Its current is very rapid, though its bed is deep. As to its breadth, some say, it is about that of the Thames at Windsor; and others, that it is only thirty yards wide; but they observe, that its depth makes sufficient amends, it being, in many places, three yards deep at its very brink. Its course and banks are various, according to the places it runs through, some very beautiful, others choaked up with high and thick reeds, canes, and trees; such as willows, tamarisks, cleanders, &c. which quite hide the

sight of it ; and are a harbour for lions, and other beasts of prey. Jer. xlix. 19.

IF, to these prospects of nature, you connect in your imagination, those of art, such as gardens and vineyards, villages and cities, beautifully interspersed, with rural simplicity and primitive magnificence, you will not wonder that Moses, after so many years travel in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness, should so earnestly request to enter the land of promise ; or, being denied that favour, that he should be gratified with a sight of it from the top of Pisgah, before he expired. From this mountain, “ the Lord shewed him, all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea ; and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of Palm-Trees unto Zoar.” If this was not the most extensive, it was one of the most delightful prospects the eyes of man ever beheld. Many things contributed to make it so : Moses was indulged with this prospect after having seen, for forty years, the most mournful scenes imaginable ; it was not his adversary, but his friend, his best friend, who set the variegated views before him ; not to tempt him, but to support him in a dying moment. He saw therefore, not only the land

of

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of Canaan to the greatest advantage, but, in every view, he saw, the goodness and faithfulness of God to Israel, his patience and justice to the Canaanites, and his approbation and acceptance of his own labours among his people: a prospect this, which nothing could exceed, but that which he now enjoys. Here then we draw the curtain; for after such a prospect, it is only with regret we can now behold inferior scenes.

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LETTER IV.

CONCERNING the produce of any country that is fruitful, the kinds and qualities merit our regard.

THE produce of Canaan, as to kind, was very various. Among the vegetable productions, were corn for man and beast, olives, dates, balsam, or balm of Gilead, spices, myrrh, citrons, oranges, apples, apples of Paradise, figs, plumbs, nuts, almonds, and honey from trees, as well as from flowers. It produced also, sugar-canæs, cotton, hemp and flax; and besides the trees and shrubs common to other countries, it had cypress and cedar trees, with almost every other that was fragrant, or majestic. These, however, were not in every province, nor in every part of the same province, equally plentiful. A scarcity of wood for fuel, as also of water for cattle, in some places, and at particular seasons, was felt in Canaan even in its most fertile state.

It's waters were greatly diversified. Some were sweet and clear; other waters, were salt and turbid. If the lake of Sodom was horrible, that of Galilee was delightful, and exceeding-

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ly fruitful. Jordan, and the smaller rivers, with the waters of Siloam, were both pleasing and profitable:—art availed herself even of the lake of Sodom; physicians finding there what was serviceable in their profession, and the mason a cement of considerable use in his. On the whole, if almost every end that water could answer, whether for shew or service, for medicinal or common purposes, be worthy our notice, such were the waters of Canaan.—Nor was this highly-favoured land wanting in minerals, mines, and precious stones. Silver and gold, it did not indeed produce; but from Elah and Ezion-geber, two seaports on the Red-Sea, in David's time, such a trade was opened to the East Indies, and particularly to Ophir, that David gave no less than three thousand talents of gold to the house of God, afterwards erected by Solomon; who improved this trade so much in his time, that he drew to the two ports I have mentioned, and so to Jerusalem, all the trade of Africa, Arabia, Persia, and India; which, as Dr. Prideaux observes, was the chief fountain of those immense riches which he acquired, and whereby he exceeded all the kings of the earth in his time, as much as he did by his wisdom; so that he made silver to be at Jerusalem, as the stones

of the street, by reason of the great plenty with which it there abounded during his reign.

As the kinds of produce were so various, much more so than I have mentioned, (besides fish and fowl, cattle and creeping things of different species, which I shall not attempt to enumerate;) so, the quality of each, or of the greater part of each, was excellent in its kind; and the quantity much more abundant than one would have expected to have found within such narrow limits.—Were I to speak of the fertility of this little spot, from human authority only, it would have more of the air of romance than the appearance of truth. On this subject, therefore, I shall content myself with making a few extracts from those records, which I know you will regard, and from which, not any thing contrary to truth can be expected.

FROM them, it appears, that the soil was exceedingly luxuriant.—When Lot approached its borders, he found the prospect enchanting. “He lifted up his eyes,” it is said, “and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot, chose him all the plain of Jordan;” yet, we have no reason to suppose, that it was more

fertile than many other parts of Canaan. — On account of the incomparable fertility of this land, it was frequently and elegantly described, as, “A land flowing with milk and honey.” This account was confirmed by the spies; who cannot be suspected of being partial in its favour: yet, notwithstanding all their prejudices, and all their fears, after many days search, they returned, and made this report to the camp: “Surely, it floweth with milk and honey; “and” (presenting, at the same time, the grapes, the pomegranates and figs, they had brought with them from Eshcol) “this,” say they, “is the fruit of it.”

I HAVE before observed, how earnest Moses was to enter this land, after his long and tedious journeys, in a barren and inhospitable wilderness. His words are affecting; and as they shew how delightful Canaan appeared to him, who believed the divine report concerning it, I will transcribe them. “I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon!” This was his petition; and though it was not granted, yet when the Lord had shewed him those prospects mentioned in my last letter, he said to Moses, “This is the land I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed.” Language like this

this must convince us, that what Moses now saw of the fertility of Canaan, fully answered his highest expectation: and doubtless, in this view, it gave him great pleasure, that the present prospect so well agreed with that description he had before given of this land to the children of Israel, entirely on credit; for, long before this, he had told them, “The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olives and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig bras.”

BESIDES, when Joshua entered into the land of promise, it was not a little improved by art, and the labour of the inhabitants; for, they had not only strong cities and a fat land, but they possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, olive trees, and fruit trees in abundance. In a word, we may truly say of Canaan, it was *the glory of all lands.*

BUT how came it to be so? This is worthy your observation; and concerning it, Moses gives us this pleasing information. “The land,” saith

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he, “ whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land full of hills and valleys, and drinketh in water of the rain of heaven, a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.” How much more satisfactory is this short account, than the tedious and trifling conjectures of some concerning the physical causes of its fertility? Socrates himself, has somewhere ventured to declare, That which make objects fine, is the presence, or approach, or communication of what he calls, the original fine Being, whatever be the way of that communication: the way he observes, is various and often mysterious, but, the thing is certain.—Let me add, that persons are as dependent on the divine Being as things: they whom he careth for, and on whom his eyes are, to bless and prosper, from one end of the year to the other, they, like the land of Canaan, are more excellent than the rest. May this blessing be yours!

You will no doubt be told, sooner or later, by some evil spies, that at present, there remains no appearance of such fertility as Revelation speaks

speaks of, in the land of Canaan. They will be ready to suggest, that those accounts are incredible; and from thence infer, you ought not to place too much confidence in the Bible. But whom will you believe? Them who have seen only the nakedness of the land, perhaps have only heard of it; or Him who made it what it once was, and who, for the wickedness of its inhabitants, has made it what it now is? I add, there are not wanting, notwithstanding the present appearance of Canaan, credible witnesses to corroborate the scripture account of its former fertility. The Holy Land, says Dr. Shaw, were it as well peopled and cultivated as in former times, would still be more fruitful than the very best part of the coast of Syria and Phœnix; for the soil is generally much richer, and, all things considered, yields a more preferable crop. Thus the cotton that is gathered in the plains of Ramah, Esdraeon, and Zabulun, is in greater esteem than what is cultivated near Sidon and Tripoli. Neither is it possible for pulse, wheat, or any sort of grain, to be more excellent than what is sold at Jerusalem. The barrenness, or scarcity rather, which some authors may, either ignorantly or maliciously, complain of, doth not proceed from the incapacity or natural unfruitfulness of the country, but from the want of inhabitants, and the great

aversion there is to labour and industry, in those few who possess it. There are, besides, such perpetual discords and depredations among the petty princes who share this fine country, that, allowing it was better peopled, yet there would be small encouragement to sow, when it was uncertain who should gather in the harvest: otherwise, the land is a good land, and still capable of affording its neighbours the like supplies of corn and oil, which it is known to have done in the time of Solomon.

To the same purpose, is the testimony of Mr. Maundrell, in his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem; who, in answer to the objection of Canaan's being unable to maintain so great a number of people as was found in the reign of David, (the number then given in by Joab, being thirteen hundred thousand men of war, besides women and children); in answer to this objection, he observes, that the rocks and hills were covered with earth, and cultivated, and made to contribute to the maintenance of the inhabitants no less than if the country had been all plain; nay, perhaps, says he, much more; as such a mountainous and uneven surface, affords a larger space of ground for cultivation than if the country had been reduced to a perfect level. The manner of fertilizing these mountains, he informs us,

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was by gathering up the stones, and placing them in several lines along the sides of the hills, in the form of a wall. By such borders they supported the mould from tumbling, or being washed down, and formed many beds of excellent soil, rising gradually one above another from the bottom to the top of the mountains: thus the very rocks were made fruitful. As to the plains, Mr. Maundrell observes, nothing could be more fruitful for the producing corn and cattle, and consequently, of milk. And though the hills in general, it seems, were improper for all cattle, except goats, yet being disposed into such beds as I have just mentioned, they produced corn, melons, gourds, cucumbers, and such-like vegetables; which, we are informed, was the principal food of those countries for several months in the year. The most rocky parts of all, which could not be managed in this manner, for the production of corn, even they, Mr. Maundrell supposes, would serve for the plantation of vines and olive trees; which delight to extract, the one its fatness, and the other its sprightly juice, chiefly out of such dry and flinty places.—And a friend I lately conversed with, who had been at Minorca four years, assured me, that delicious figs grew there on the most barren rocks in the Island. Mr. Maundrell farther observes, that though the great plain

joining to the dead sea, by reason of its saltiness, was unfit for cattle, corn, olives, and vines, yet it was useful for the nourishment of bees, and for the produce of honey; and adds, when he was there, he perceived in many places, a smell of honey and wax, as strong as if he had been at an apiary.

I CANNOT forbear observing, that an increase of people, peaceful among themselves, intelligent and industrious, will by art and labour improve the most barren situation, and make the most of that which is fruitful: and these, let me tell you, are some of the solid advantages which religion diffuses where-ever she is embraced; first she fertilizes the mind, and then, extends her benign influences to all its operations.

LETTER V.

WHEN all is asserted that can be said, of any land, or building, it is still expected that the inhabitants of either, should be more excellent than that which they possess : if otherwise, we are always disappointed.—A stranger travelling into Egypt, when he first beholds some of it's buildings, on which so much time and cost have been bestowed, naturally expects to see something within, answerable to such labour and expence ; but how is he mortified, when instead of finding it the residence of living virtue, he finds it, the *magnificent temple of a CROCODILE* ! Far more pleasing was the disappointment of him, whose curiosity led him to see that Tabernacle which was made according to the pattern shewed in the mount ; where, badgers skins and boards, were seen without, and majesty and mercy, displayed within.

THE natural state of Canaan contrasted with the moral, must not be compared with the tabernacle in the wilderness, but with some of the pyramids in Egypt. The contrast indeed, is so shocking, that I cannot think of it without hor-

ror, nor mention it without blushing at the unspeakable depravity of human nature. Their abominations were so great and complicated, that decency forbids me to describe them ; and, I hesitate, whether it be prudent for me even so much as to mention them to you in my own words. I think it best to forbear. Such accounts, however, may come with advantage from purer pens, and especially from that of Inspiration.

So excessive, says Saurin, was the idolatry of the Canaanites, that they rendered the honours of supreme adoration not only to the most mean, but even to the most impure and infamous creatures. Their inhumanity was so excessive that they sacrificed their own children to their gods. And so monstrous was their subversion, not only of the laws of nature, but even of the common regularities of human nature, that a vice, which must not be named, was openly practised : and in short, so scandalous was the depravation of religion and good manners, that Moses, after he had given the Israelites laws against the most gross idolatry, against incest, against beastiality, against that other crime, which our dismal circumstances oblige us to mention, in spite of so many reasons for avoiding it : Moses, I say, after having forbidden all these excesses to the Israelites, positively declares that the Canaanites were guilty of

of them all ; that the earth was weary of such execrable monsters ; and that for these crimes, God had sent the Israelites to destroy them. “ Defile not yourselves,” says he in the book of Leviticus (after an enumeration of the most shameful vices that can be imagined) “ Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. Therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.” — If these words, *vomiteth out her inhabitants*, appear to you indelicately strong, when you consider, that such was the multitude and magnitude of their abominations, that, like the polluted, oppressed stomach of an abandoned rake at a revel, it groaned, as it were, under the enormous load, and could have no ease but by discharging the insupportable burden ; when you consider this, and how prone many of the Israelites were to the crimes of the people whom they conquered, what at first seemed indelicately strong, will appear, I apprehend, not only a just, but proper mode of expression.

WHAT abundantly aggravates the matter in hand, is, that these crimes were universal, open, long continued, and justified by them ; nay, they “ gloried in their shame.” These are said, to be the “ doings,” not of a few, but of “ the land of Canaan ;” for it is said, “ in ALL these

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the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you." Lev. xviii.

WE have no reason to suppose the inhabitants of Sodom, and the cities of the plain, were any worse than their neighbours ; who, it is evident, of all ranks, were not only guilty of all these things, but even gloried in their guilt. The cry of Sodom, before its destruction, was *great* : and their cry, or the cry concerning them, was *grievous*. Yet, in condescension to human weakness, and to convince us, that the Judge of All is incapable of acting from the low motive of revenge founded on popular clamour, He says, "I will go down now, and see, whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come up to me ; and if not, I will know." But, on inspection, what could exceed the abominable practices to which the whole city was addicted ? I say, *the whole city*, for, Lot and his family included, it appears, there were not ten righteous persons to be found in all the city ; and, it appears also, that in one of the most unnatural attempts that was ever made, " the men of the city, both old and young, all the people from every quarter," were more or less engaged. Nor did they desist even after they were smitten with blindness ; for, afterwards, they wearied themselves to find the door of Lot's house, and were

were determined, if possible, to break it open. With what truth then is it said, “ The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord, exceedingly.”

SHOULD you, notwithstanding all I have said on this subject, still think it improbable that men of parts and property, could be guilty of such abominations, whatever the common people might be addicted to, I must intreat you to consider, there is no exception of these, in the account I have given you from the word of truth; and, I wish you to remember, that, in ages of much greater refinement, to say nothing of the present, we have the most melancholy and certain proofs, that parts and property are but a poor defence in themselves, against the greatest abominations. Would you be convinced of this, read with attention the first chapter of Romans, where you will find some of the most striking characters paganism could produce, charged with the most shocking vices. Yes, those very men, whom one generation after another, have admired for the talents they possessed, and the parts they displayed, are there charged with the most enormous abominations. “ Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” The worst of fools: for they “ changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts,

beasts, and creeping things." They changed also, "the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." But this was not all: for, "vile affections," like the flames in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, seize on every thing within their reach, and, without a miracle, consume every thing on which they seize. You must not wonder therefore, that they who dishonour God, are injurious to men and enemies to themselves; as these pagans certainly were. They "dishonoured their own bodies between themselves," did that which was "against nature;" that which was "unseemly," and "not convenient." They were "filled with all unrighteousness," and were guilty of all "fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness:" they were also, "full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity;" they were "whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." And, like the antient pagans, though they knew the judgment of God (that they who committed such things were worthy of death) they not only did the same, but had pleasure in them who were addicted to these crimes.—Remember, these are not my conjectures,

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tures, but plain facts. Facts, which are recorded by him, whose judgement, we are sure, is "according to truth :" and whose "wrath is revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men." — But, amazing mercy ! in the same word, His "righteousness is revealed from faith to faith." May you live to embrace it, and find the gospel of Christ "the power of God unto salvation!"

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LETTER VI.

IT is sometimes said, that Satan never wants an advocate. And, while the Canaanites find so many, I don't know who can contradict the saying. Is it not astonishing, that such characters should find champions to defend them? Yet, they have found many; and there still are those, who affect to think it was an act of injustice to turn them out of their possession. How cruel, then, must such gentlemen apprehend the following declaration: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God?" Psal. ix. 17.

I PURPOSE, in this and the following letter, to lay before you the equity of the divine conduct, respecting this matter; and the right that Israel had to invade the land of Canaan.

I SHALL begin by observing, what none can deny, that, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein." It is *so* His, that it cannot be another's. He can no more part with his property absolutely, than he can with his praise. And, as he cannot, so, he has assured us, he will not.

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“ My glory” saith the Lord, “ will I not give to another.” If so, whatever he bestows on the children of men, is still more his than theirs. And we may be sure, whatever he gives them, must be for their use, and with some design worthy of Himself. This being admitted, and who can deny it ? when his gifts are abused, and his design in bestowing them is despised, may he not resent it ? And, is he not to judge at what time, in what manner, and to what degree ? May he not dispose of any part of his property as it seems good in his sight ? and at any time, take what he gave, without giving us the least occasion to reflect on his justice, his wisdom, or his goodness ? A nobleman makes no apology to his steward, for demanding his own property when, or in what manner he thinks proper ; nor, on certain occasions, for requiring him to give an account of his stewardship ; or for saying, “ Thou mayest be no longer steward.”

— ‘ What goodness gives to day,
‘ To-morrow’s goodness takes away.’

BUT some men seem determined, as much as in them lies, not to be reconciled to God. If he does not give them what they would call a “ goodly heritage,” their language is, ‘ What have we done ?’ If he does, and, through their

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own lusts, it prove an occasion to increase their guilt, then, they say, ‘ Why were we tempted and insnared with such possessions? we had been more happy without them.’ If, to chastise such insolence, to guard others against it, or for other benevolent purposes, He, who is Lord of All, takes from such men, what they have abused to their hurt, the cry then is, ‘ Where is the goodness, where is the justice of God in a conduct like this?’ But the true reason why any disapprove of the *divine* conduct is, because, he prefers *his own*; and, when that is the case, instead of wishing to be reconciled to the conduct of God, we think he ought to be reconciled to ours!

ONE method which the Lord takes in correcting such wicked and unprofitable servants in this world, is, by withdrawing his abused talents from them, and giving them to others; who also are liable to the same chastisement, if they forget the design of their being intrusted with them. Thus he dealt with the Canaanites, after long forbearance with them; and thus, also, he dealt with the Jews, when they forgot the design of his mercy towards them, and despised the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering. He who gave them the land of Canaan, drove them out of it; but not till they had long forgotten.

gotten their Maker, and the true design of his bounty and favour. They first forsook God who made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation. “ They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.” — “ I brought you,” saith the Lord, “ into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. The priest said not, where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me; and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.” We are also informed, that “ All the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much *after all the abominations of the heathen*, (an enumeration of whose crimes would fill a folio) and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.” What followed? Why “ the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” — But I recollect myself; I am not writing, at present,

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present, on the Loss of CANAAN by the children of Israel, but on their right to invade it.

CONCERNING this, Moses informs us, “ When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” This shews, that from the beginning, Canaan was designed to be “ the lot of their inheritance.”—Till the building of Babel, “ the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.” While that monument of vanity was erecting, the divine Being expressed his disapprobation of the conduct of those foolish builders, by confounding their language, and scattering them abroad, “ upon the face of all the earth.” “ And they left off to build the city.” Thus, at last, will every confederacy against God, however formidable, perish like Babel: for, where the foundation is pride, the issue must be confusion. On their being scattered abroad, though men seemed to settle in distinct bodies, as caprice, or some unaccountable turn, inclined them, yet every settlement was under the direction of Him, who disposes of every lot in providence and grace, and who ought to be “ acknowledged in all our ways.”

IT is remarkable, that the bounds, so long since prescribed to the seven nations of Canaan, should be according to the number of the children of Israel; and that such a country was measured out and bounded, as would be sufficient to hold the twelve tribes of Israel when numerous, and their time was come to inhabit it. By express deed of gift, God gave this country, in its improved state, to Abram, and his posterity. Abram dwelt at that time, in Ur of the Chaldees. And the Lord said unto him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land, that I will shew thee." It is evident the Lord is here speaking of Canaan, where Abram and Lot immediately went; (though the Canaanite was then in the Land). And the Lord appeared again to Abram, and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Gen. xii. 7.

IN another place, the same grant is renewed, with an addition of some pleasing particulars.— God had said, he would make Abram's name great; and, by the approbation which he shewed of his moderation and condescension to Lot, it is easy to see when a man is waxing great in the sight of the Lord. Immediately after this, he said unto Abram, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou

thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward and westward ; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed, for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth ; so that if any man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it : for I will give it unto thee." Gen. xiii. 14—17.

As yet, however, Abram had "no seed ;" and after another signal appearance of God in his favour, he ventures to mention this difficulty. " And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus ? And Abram said, behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and lo, one born in mine house is mine heir." This difficulty was happily removed, by the following declaration: " And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." After this, the grant of Canaan, to him, and to his seed, was confirmed in much the same expressions as before.

ABRAM, still being unable to conceive how his posterity, so few in number, could obtain the land of Canaan for their inheritance, and being

now anxious to know how this could be effected, he, as usual in all his difficulties, made application to the Lord. He said, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" The answer to this question, at first, was very mysterious; it was followed, however, with this explanation: "Know of a surety, that, thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also, that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward, they shall come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Possibly, this answer may be still plainer to you, in the following expressions. It is then, as if God had said, 'Know, Abraham, for a certainty, that thy seed shall be strangers in the land of Egypt, and shall serve the Egyptians; who shall afflict them, at least, four hundred years. But I will judge the Egyptians, and deliver thy posterity from the house of bondage; out of which, I will bring them with great substance. As for thyself, thou shalt die in peace, be buried in a good old age, and go to thy fathers; who are in possession of the heavenly inheritance. But, notwithstanding

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withstanding the time of thy departure is hastening on, in the fourth generation thy seed shall certainly come hither again, and not before; for, the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.'

EVERY thing happened according to this prediction. By a chain of remarkable events, the posterity of Abram went down into Egypt, and continued in the furnace of affliction the appointed time; when that time was expired, "all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt, with great substance." Abraham, (for afterwards his name was changed from Abram to Abraham) long before this event took place, departed in peace, but the God of Abraham, who delivered his seed from Egypt, conducted them to Canaan, and subdued it before them: "for they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them." Ps. xliv. 3.

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LETTER VII.

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U have seen, that Canaan was originally designed for the children of Israel. It was theirs by gift, by inheritance, and afterwards by lot. Its antient bounds were set according to their number. They were preserved, multiplied and delivered, to inherit it. The first inhabitants were cast out for their own wickedness, and Israel entered into their possessions, as the ministers of divine justice; not upon the footing of merit, but of favour. Ps. xliv. 3.

LET us farther observe, that, as their claim to the land of Canaan was just, not only the most afflicting providences, but the basest passions of the human heart, were made subservient to the divine purpose, in giving them possession of the promised land.

THE history of Joseph is inimitably affecting. Your heart is too tender not to feel its force. The silent tear has often trickled down your cheek, when you found the innocent youth exposed to the cruelty of his brethren; who, first cast him, relentless, you remember, into the pit;

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and, afterwards, sold him to the Ishmaelites. But this was but one link, in a long mysterious chain, by which, not only the life of Joseph was preserved, but his dreams fulfilled; by which, Jacob also, was brought into Egypt, the place where Israel was to be afflicted and multiplied, and from whence they were, at length, to march to Canaan. As envy and cruelty among brethren, so, even the horrors of famine, were made subservient to the same design. *Made so*, I said, for, the evils I have mentioned, in themselves, are big with mischief, and full of destruction. By the over-ruling hand of God, Joseph was conducted to Egypt; and before the famine approached, which he foresaw and foretold, he was second to none there, but Pharoah. This famine was grievous and extensive. Canaan felt it severely. But Jacob had heard “there was corn in Egypt.” On this report, he said to his sons, “Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live and not die.” The brethren obeyed their father; and out of the remaining eleven, Benjamin only, was left behind.—You know what followed: not only Benjamin, but Jacob himself, went down to Egypt; the whole family were settled in Goshen; and Jacob died there.

JOSEPH’s conduct at the death of his father, is such an instance of filial respect to an aged parent, that,

that, for your sake, I think it my duty to remind you of it.

JACOB was now an hundred and forty-seven years old. "And it came to pass, that one told Joseph, behold, thy father is sick." Joseph, though at that time Viceroy of Egypt, felt himself the son of Jacob ; and found those few words, "Behold, thy father is sick," awake his tenderest passions. Instantly, he visited his father, and took with him his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. "Now, the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see." No matter ; Joseph saw him, and bowed himself before him. What a charming sight was here ! a venerable old man departing with praise to the God of his mercies, and prophetically blessing his children, while they, and Joseph, though so much exalted, were worshipping at his feet. Now tell me, whom did Joseph, by this amiable conduct, honour most ? his father, or himself ?

AT length, Joseph died also. But, like his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he died in faith. He said to his brethren, "I die ; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ;" for the gift of the earthly, as well as of the heavenly inheritance, was confirmed by an oath. "And Joseph"

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also “ took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old ; and they embalmed him, and he was put into a coffin in Egypt.”

“ AFTER the death of Joseph, and all his brethren, and all that generation, the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty ; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more, and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply ; and it came to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.” Don’t you behold the envy and fear which alternately agitated this haughty monarch’s breast ? Israel was the object of both. Their increase awakened his envy, and their strength filled him with fear. He wished to detain them, but, at the same time, was afraid to keep them. To weaken their growing strength, he proposed to deal wisely ; but wickedness is always folly, and when it is called wisdom, God loves to confound it.

PHARAOH's first attempt to diminish Israel was, by setting over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. While they were under these wretched despots, "they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." I hope, you will recollect this, "and the years wherein they laboured," when you think of their going out from their bondage with the substance of Egypt. How oft have deliverers been celebrated, who, if they have given a part of the property of tyrants to those who were once their slaves, at the same time, took care to enrich themselves with the spoils of that conquest, to which their secret motives were ambition and lust of dominion. And yet, these very men, and their most sanguine admirers, are for ever excepting against the conduct of their Maker; though in it, there is infinitely more than all their virtue, without the least tincture of their villainy !

PHARAOH, and his people, had the mortification to find, "the more they afflicted the children of Israel, the more they multiplied and grew." This was a disappointment they could not bear with temper; for, "they were grieved," it is said, "because of the children of Israel." Hateful disposition ! tis pity that any but fiends should possess it. But when cruelty possesses the mind, it teems with the most extravagant designs to gra-

tify its lust. If Pharaoh, therefore, finds he cannot weaken Israel, by making them serve him in all their service "with rigour," cannot he prevent a succession of their sons, by ordering, in future, the male children to be destroyed, and the female only, to be preserved alive? He is determined to try. The order given to the midwives to execute this horrid purpose, is plain and express. But "the midwives feared God:" and he was again disappointed. — The lusts of the wicked, like our natural appetite to food, must if possible be supplied; but, while life remains, they, like it, are never satisfied. Pharaoh, though a slave to his lust, seems to have been a stranger to its insatiable nature; or, he had not said, "My lust shall be satisfied." — He was still determined, however, to gratify it as far as he could; and hoping that what the midwives, who feared God, would not do, others would; he charged them, saying, "Every son that is born, ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." Ex. i. 22.

IN those perilous times, was Moses born. A more comely infant was hardly ever seen. He was exceeding fair; and in his parents eyes, a "proper" child to be preserved. In him, they thought they saw a deliverer; and, it is certain,

tain, from what they saw and felt, at this time, “ they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Heb. xi. 23. — The manner in which Moses was preserved in the water, taken out of the ark, committed to his mother to nurse, and introduced at court, as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, lives in your remembrance ; and, as it is impossible for me to equal the sweet simplicity, and charming brevity of the narrative written by himself, instead of attempting to imitate it, I shall, as I did before concerning Joseph in his distress, leave you to consult the original picture.

MOSES having spent forty years in the court of Pharaoh, under peculiar advantages for the following scenes of action, and having wisely improved those advantages, (for, “ he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians ; and was mighty in words and deeds) it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.”

—Whatever honours are conferred on us by strangers, if, by them, we are tempted to forget our brethren, we remain in a state of disgrace which no outward honours can conceal. By brethren, however, the children of the same immediate parent are not only intended, but the children of Israel at large. Probably, Moses found he was circumcised, by which sign in the flesh, the children of Israel were not only distinguished

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from the Egyptians, but from other nations. It appears also, that Moses understood how that God by his hand would deliver the children of Israel from the Egyptians; but his brethren, for a time, did not understand this; nor were they willing to receive him in such a character. Moses, finding he was rejected by his brethren, and in danger of being betrayed to Pharaoh, fled; and was a stranger in the land of Midian. Here he continued forty years; for the set time to deliver Israel was not yet come. When it approached, “God heard the groaning of his people, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked on the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”

THIS respect was to be manifested by Moses: of course, therefore, it must be first made manifest to him. “Now Moses, at this time, kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even unto Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of the bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is

is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here I am. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face: for he was afraid to look on God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land, unto a good land, and large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey, unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and Jebusites. Now therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come up unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

IF with this commission, you attend to the objections, and the ground of them, which Moses

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had against going into the presence of Pharaoh ; the manner in which they were overcome ; the miracles that immediately sealed his commission, and those wrought by him to confirm it, in Egypt ; the effect those miracles had on the Egyptians, who at last intreated them to depart ; if you attend also to Pharaoh's repentance and rage ; the manner in which he and his host were overthrown in the Red Sea ; and the end for which Israel were delivered ; if you attend to all these things, the manner in which they subsisted in the wilderness, and journied to Canaan, with the express orders they had from the King of kings, Lord of lords, when, where, and how to invade that country, with the reasons which he gave them for so doing ; you can have no doubt, I think, either of the equity of the Divine conduct, on the one hand, or, of the right the children of Israel had to invade the land of Canaan, on the other.

SHOULD it be said, ' If it was right for them to invade Canaan, because they pretended it was given them of God, other fanatics may pretend the same right to our possessions, and deprive us and our posterity of what we should otherwise peaceably enjoy.' I answer ; what some fanatics may do, I know not ; it must be confessed some of them have done strange things, and, probably, will

will again ; but when any number of persons can produce such a commission as I have cited, when they can work so many miracles to confirm it, when, without one carnal weapon, they can execute their commission in such a manner, that a kingdom like Egypt, shall “intreat them to depart,” and the heart of seven kingdoms, like those of Canaan, shall “melt before them ;” when it is equally evident that the grand end of their deliverance from one tyrannical power, and their subduing others, was *to serve God*, and that they who did not regard this end were brought to destruction ; when all this happens, fanaticism certainly will be quite out of the question ; and we shall be constrained to own, that such things can only be effected by Him, who “worketh all things according to the” unerring “counsel of his own will.”

LETTER VIII.

HAD I seen the nitrous train leading to the barrels of powder placed under the parliament house, and Guy Faux, waiting, with horrid impatience, to fire it, I should not more certainly have seen approaching ruin, had not a miracle of mercy prevented, than in the long train of moral evils, to which we have seen the inhabitants of Canaan addicted. Sin, in every age, is the constant harbinger of ruin, to nations and individuals; nor less so, where the measure of iniquity is not filled up till old age. For if, through the forbearance of God, the sinner should not only escape tremendous judgments in this world, but live in plenty, and, at his death, by the companions of his guilt be highly applauded, (which, doubtless, was the case with many of the vicious inhabitants of Canaan) yet still, the impenitent sinner “dying an hundred years old, shall be accursed.” You may depend on it, that nothing is displeasing to God but sin; and that sin is so displeasing to him, he will not be reconciled to it on any terms whatever. That any perish,

perish, sin is always the cause ; and we are told, the final destruction of sinners is exactly proportioned to the nature, and number of their crimes ; for, “ the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him, actions are weighed.” That any sinner is saved, is owing entirely to grace ; but then, though the mercy of God be infinite, the exercise of it is limited according to the good pleasure of his will, who abounds towards us, “ in all wisdom and prudence.” They who are saved by the Lord, are saved for him : in other words ; they who are saved by his grace, are redeemed to shew forth his praise ; and they who are not thus redeemed, are yet in bondage to corruption. “ Let my people go, that they may serve me,” is a key to the whole history of redemption, in every view. This is the immutable design of our Redeemer in every deliverance ; and no farther than any approve of it, and concur with it, can they have any fellowship with him who is mighty to save. Not keeping this in view, you will see many wax proud, who ought to have been humble ; and many rebellious who were under the strongest obligations to be obedient. It is impossible without this clue to read of the redemption of Israel, and of the conquest of Canaan, with understanding ; or, without drawing conclusions, as unwise as they are unjust ; but with that, we shall proceed with safety,

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safety, if not with satisfaction ; which, at present, in every circumstance before us, you are not to expect.

THE date of Israel's deliverance from the Egyptian yoke, was in the year of the world 2453 ; before Christ 1497 ; and 3274 years before the present time. It is from this event, the history of the Conquest of Canaan properly commences. But the foundation we have laid in the preceding letters, will prevent disagreeable digressions, and such repetitions as would otherwise be unavoidable. The number of the children of Israel, who left Egypt, was about 600,000, on foot, that were men, besides women and children. " And a mixed multitude went up also with them ; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle." What an astonishing increase is this from the 70 souls who went down into Egypt with Jacob ! for, if there were now 600,000, exclusive of women, and children ; it is probable the whole number of the children of Israel, at this time, was not less than two millions and 400,000. And what seems equally surprising is, that, in such a number of people, " there was not one feeble person among their tribes." Ps. cv. 37. See here, the fulfilment of a promise, to an astonishing degree, for the time, which the Lord made to Abraham, when he said : " Surely, blessing,

blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."

BESIDES the number I have mentioned of the children of Israel, we are to add, that of the mixed multitude who went up out of Egypt with them, which was very considerable. This mixed multitude, according to Dr. Gill, were Egyptians, and some of other nations who had resided in Egypt; and who, on various accounts, he supposes, might choose to go along with the children of Israel; some through intermarriages with them, being loth to part with their relations; others on account of their religion, being proselytes of righteousness; and others, through worldly interest; the land of Egypt being, by the plagues, a most desolate place; and such wonders being wrought for the children of Israel, they saw they were a people that were the favourites of heaven, and judged it safest and best, and most for their interest, to keep with them. Their journeys, and the most remarkable events attending them, from the first, to the reduction of Canaan, now demand our notice. On this ample field of instruction, I shall make an entrance in the following letter.

LETTER IX.

THE children of Israel, with Moses and Aaron, their leaders, began their long and tedious march from Raamses, a city in Egypt; which, in the days of their bondage, they had built for Pharaoh. They left this city on the fifteenth day of the first month, the month Nisan, called afterwards Abib, from this event. This month answers to part of our March and part of April. It was yet night when they began their march; and a dreadful night indeed, it was, to the Egyptians; who were then burying their first born, and, at once deprived, perhaps, of every friend they had that was able and willing to improve the awful visitation. Yet, so infatuated were they, that, "they were glad when Israel departed: for, the fear of them fell upon them." Fatal mistake! had they been afraid of sin, it might have done them some good. But, alas, how common is it to mistake the occasion for the cause of events; and, on the other hand, the cause for what is only the occasion. Thus their foolish hearts were darkened, and their minds more

more and more hardened against the Lord and his chosen people.

BUT this night, so dreadful to the Egyptians, was a night never to be forgotten by the children of Israel. "It is a night," says Moses, "to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing them out of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel, in their generations." It was to them illuminated by the fiery pillar, the marvellous token of the divine presence; which continued with them night by night, as the cloud of glory day by day, throughout all their journies. Ex. xiii. 22.

THE day after their departure from Raamses, they came to Succoth. The following day, they came to Etham. It may be proper to observe, that the Red sea is so connected with the wilderness of Etham, or Shur, that before they passed through that sea, they were in the wilderness of Etham, and when they passed through it, they were in this wilderness again. The next day, they came to Pi-hahiroth, which is before Baal-zephon, an idol so called; because, this idol was considered as a watch, or spy, and was stationed there to prevent any going from, or coming that way into Egypt, to the injury of the country. But Moses, in passing by it, and pitching before Mig-dol, was willing to shew them that this idol, like

every

every other, was worthless and vain. The following day, Pharaoh was informed that Israel was fled. Till this day, they went right for Horeb ; but when they turned out of the way towards the Red sea, Pharaoh, who had the earliest intelligence of all their motions, was greatly alarmed. I question, however, whether he would have ventured to pursue them, had he not supposed they were “ entangled in the land, and, that the wilderness had shut them in.” Pleased with this report, he thirsted for revenge, and panted for slaughter. “ The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ; my lust shall be satisfied upon them ; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.” The heart of his servants, like their master’s, was turned by the bias of their own corruption, as the heart of one man, against the people : and they said, “ Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us ?” The next day, in a vast body, they pursued the children of Israel ; and on the following, towards evening, they overtook them by the sea, besides Pihahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

IT is remarkable, that, the “ Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, now removed, and went behind them ; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the

the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness unto them, but it gave light by night unto these: so that one came not near to the other all night."—There is no preaching to hearts, judicially hardened, or, one should have thought, such a marvellous interposition of providence, connected with all the preceding in favour of Israel, would have said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," with such force, that the Egyptians must have understood, and felt it. But there was not wanting probably, among them, some philosopher who, according to the principles of science, falsely so called, attempted to account for this phænomenon, and for the waters of the Red sea being afterwards divided. And, it is still more probable, some magician, or soothsayer, was at hand, to interpret each of these appearances in their favour. They who love to be deceived, may expect in the end, to be destroyed, and that "without remedy." This was the awful end of Pharaoh, and of the Egyptians who ministered to his lusts; while they were dreaming of inflicting vengeance, they felt it; and brought "upon themselves swift destruction."

ON the twenty first of Nisan, and on the seventh day of their departure from Egypt, including the fifteenth of Nisan, the day of their departure

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ture, early in the morning, the children of Israel came out of the Red sea, and saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore. This was the last holy day of the passover week ; on which, they sang the wonders of their redemption in those triumphant strains, that are still extant in Exodus the fifteenth. Moses composed this song, in which, I know not whether the graces of poetry, or the language of piety be most conspicuous. It is the first, and, perhaps, the sublimest song of praise we meet with in the Old Testament. If you wish to see its peculiar excellencies displayed to great advantage, read Rollin on the eloquence of the sacred writings, in his Belles Lettres. And, if you would see, in one view, an elegant and concise abridgment of my whole subject, read the 105th and the 106th psalms. In the last, the following lines are very affecting : “ Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.” “ Remembered not his mercies ! Why, had they not just recorded them,’ you will say, ‘ in their song ?’ True ; “ they sang his praise, but they soon forgat his works !” They provoked him also ; nay more, they provoked him where he had miraculously preserved them ; at the sea, even at the *Red sea* ! “ They waited not for his counsel :” says the text, “ but

lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." These are crimes which can neither be concealed, nor atoned for, by songs of praise. May heaven preserve you from meditating such guilt; and from placing any, even the least confidence, as it seems too many then did, in false devotion! May you live to make melody in your heart to the Lord! and then your life, as well as your lips, will be vocal to his praise.

FROM the Red sea, they journeyed three days in the wilderness of Etham, and came to Marah. Here, the waters were bitter; which, when they had tasted, their murmurings were almost as universal, as before, their praise. They who are addicted to murmuring, seldom want occasion; though it must be confessed, that the present occasion of their murmuring, reminds us of human weakness, as the manner in which they murmured reminds us of their guilt; for, whatever we enjoy, if only so common a blessing as water be wanting, nay, if granted, with the disagreeable circumstance of its being unpalatable, we are, unavoidably, unhappy. How unseemly for such necessitous, dependant creatures, ever to be proud, or, provoking! Israel at this time, were both: but God was patient, compassionate, and kind. He shewed Moses a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, though, it is supposed, the

tree

tree itself was bitter, “ the waters were made sweet.” Having performed this miracle, “ he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.” Perhaps they were made to understand, that what was now done, was, what they might expect from the Lord in all their journies: that if they behaved ill, they must expect the bitter waters of affliction; but, if otherwise, pleasant and good things. This seems to be confirmed by the following words: “ If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee.” And to suppose, there is any thing in the gospel which teaches us to despise, or even to neglect a declaration like this, in our walk with God, is to suppose, that, though his grace was made subservient to his government, in the former dispensation, it is made destructive of that end in the present.

THEIR next remove was to Elim, where they found twelve wells of water, and seventy palm-trees. Here they tarried several days. It seems probable at this, and the following remove, by the Red sea, (to that part of it which lay near a little

sea-port town called Tor, not far from Elim) they rested 20 days.—On the 15th of the month Ijar, they came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai: in this wilderness, “ the whole congregation of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron.” Their murmurings now, were thus expressed: “ Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full: For ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” When they were in Egypt, they did, in effect, say, ‘ Would to God we were any where but here !’ And now, the sense of their language is. ‘ We had rather live in Egypt than any where else.’ They, who leave a place or people, on account of some outward burdens only, if those burdens be removed, will gladly return. Many who left Egypt in their haste, left their hearts behind them; and they, in all their wanderings, were more at Egypt than in the wilderness. I cannot help suspecting, therefore, that these murmurings were fomented by the mixed multitude we have taken notice of before. But, be that as it might, their united murmurs did not prevent the continued exercise of his mercy who “ maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and who sendeth rain

on the just and on the unjust." As their present murmurings were for bread and flesh, manna and quails were now given. But what God gave them in mercy, they could not even gather without some continued mark of their disobedience. Well might he say, " How long refuse ye to keep my commandments, and my laws ? "

HAVING staid in the wilderness of Sin nearly a week, they went to Dophkah, and from thence to Alush, and thence to Rephidim ; where they once more murmured for want of water. As their unbelief increased, so did their murmurings. " Give us water," said they to Moses, " that we may drink. And Moses said to them, Why chide you with me ? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord ? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people ? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with you of the elders of Israel ; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb ; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah :" Massah, because they tempted the Lord, saying, " is

“is the Lord among us, or not?” Meribah, because “of the chiding of the children of Israel,” with Moses.

THEIR wants, you see, were supplied, notwithstanding all their murmurings; but, lest they should imagine their murmurs were not resented, unexpectedly, Amalek made war upon them.—The Amalekites were the descendants of Cush, and bordered eastward on the wilderness of Shur. What their motive was for fighting with Israel, is not easy to say; they had heard, it is probable, of their coming out of Egypt with great riches, and their design might be plunder. Unless we can suppose them to be an ally of the Canaanites, and so bound, by treaty, to obstruct their passage to the land of Canaan. We are sure, however, that their general motives were wicked, though what their particular motive was, is not so evident. It is certain they fought without any just provocation; for, the Israelites, instead of attempting to enter their country, were rather going from it; they therefore came behind them, and fell upon their rear, even on all that were feeble, faint, and weary. They knew, it seems, the circumstances of Israel, and, being destitute of the fear of God, they were determined to take them at all disadvantages.

THIS battle brought Joshua out of obscurity upon the stage of action, who makes a striking figure in the following part of this history. Joshua, at the command of Moses, chose out men to fight with Amalek; while Moses, with Aaron his brother, and Hur, (who is said to be the husband of Miriam) went to the top of Horeb; not so much to see the battle, as to be seen of Joshua, and those who went with him to fight the Amalekites. From this eminence, the rod, by which such wonders had been performed, was seen in the right hand of Moses; while the other was stretcht out to the God of armies, in prayer, for their success. Prudence, if genuine, will be glad of the aid of piety; and genuine piety will not disdain the aid of prudence. It was as much Joshua's duty to fight, as it was the duty of Moses to pray: nevertheless, prudence the most consummate, and even piety, however sincere, do not always succeed according to our expectation, either in obtaining a conquest over others, or in defending ourselves from the insults of our enemies: for, in every view, we are saved by grace. Now, Israel prevailed over Amalek; and soon, the scene was reversed; yet, Israel persevered, with courage, and with patience; and was at length crowned with conquest. “ Joshua discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword:” a memorial of

of this event, for future instruction, was written in a book ; and Moses took care to build an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-NISSI, acknowledging the Lord was their banner. Soon after this battle, they approached Mount Sinai ; of which, in the following letter.

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LETTER X.

IN the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai, and encamped before the mount. Dr. Lightfoot supposes, this was done on the first day of the month; the month Sivan. On the second, he says, Moses being called, went up into the mount, and conversed with God; and came down the same day, and related the words of the Lord unto the people. On the third day he went up again, and related the people's answer to God. The two following days, he sanctified the people, and set the prescribed bounds to the mountain. On the sixth day, in the morning, the ten commandments were given in a manner tremendous, beyond conception. The mountain burned and shook; darkness, blackness, and tempest, increased the awful solemnity of this morning; and with it, Israel's attention. The trumpet sounded; the people trembled; and so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear, and quake." The Almighty

mighty spake: immediately, the people intreated Moses, saying, “ Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die.” Moses said, “ Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.” And the people stood afar off—but Moses drew near unto the thick darkness, where God was; and received fifty-seven precepts, ceremonial and judicial, which, when he came down from the mount, he delivered to the people; and, afterwards, wrote them in a book. On the seventh day of Sivan in the morning, he built an altar, and set up twelve pillars; the former, it is supposed, to represent Christ; and the latter, to represent the 12 tribes; both were sprinkled with blood; on which, the people entered into a covenant with God. The elders of Israel, with Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, were now, all of them, permitted to see the God of Israel: “ and there was under his feet, as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” How different was this interview to the last! There was darkness, here was light; there was distance, here was nearness; there they trembled, here they rejoiced; there

they fasted, here they feasted ; such, and so great, is the difference of approaching to the same God, even in this world; with, and without, a mediator.

WHILE Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, were thus indulged, Moses was called from among them into the mount. Joshua, his minister, accompanied him part of the way, and Aaron and Hur had the care of the people below: at this time, Moses was in the Mount forty days and forty nights, with God. It was in this visit he was shewed the form of the tabernacle, and all its utensils, and saw the high priest in his pontificals, and all things relating to his office, and was charged to make all things according to the pattern shewed him in the mount. At the sametime, Bezaleel and Aholiab, were appointed chief workmen in building the tabernacle, and in making the high priest's garments, and were made superintendents of all the work pertaining to the sanctuary service. The sacred history of these transactions, you have in Exodus, from chapter the xxv. to the xxxi. inclusive.

ON the 17th day of the month Tamuz, Moses came down from the mount, enriched with the law of God on two tables of stone, and with complete instructions respecting the tabernacle, and all things pertaining to its service. But, previous

previous to his departure, God informed him of the idolatry of the people who were left with Aaron, and said to Moses, “ Go, get thee down ; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them ; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy Gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”—The conduct of Moses, on this occasion, was such as might be expected from a man who had been long in the mount with God. He pitied the people, detested their crime, and was more concerned for the honour of the divine character than for his own reputation. In this disposition, he prayed to the Lord for Israel, and was successful. He then came to Joshua who was yet a stranger to what had happened, and they went down together to the people : and “ when Joshua heard the noise of the people, as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome : but the noise of them that sing do I hear.” Moses was silent. A few steps more, explained the whole ; for, “ as soon as he came nigh to the camp, he saw the

calf and dancing." The anger of Moses waxed hot on this occasion; but it was not excessive. The calf was destroyed; the tables broken; and there fell on that day, by the hand of the Levites, about 3000 men. God also declared, "In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people, because they worshipped the calf, which Aaron made."

THE next day, Moses returned to God by prayer; but, before night, he came back with heavy tidings to the people. Ex. xxxiii. 4. Israel, on this occasion, was deeply humbled; and Moses now removed his tent out of the unclean camp, and called it "the tabernacle of the congregation;" on which, the cloud of glory, which had been taken away because of their idolatry, was restored. The next day, Moses went up again into the mount, and was there, with the Lord, forty days, as before. At this delightful interview, he desired to behold the divine glory; and, at length, obtained his request: for, on the thirtieth day of the month Ab, (having come down and hewn two tables of stone, according to divine appointment) he returned, a third time, to God in the mount, with the two tables of stone, and enjoyed, once more, forty days communion with JEHOVAH. In this last visit, he saw the Lord, and heard him proclaim his gracious and glorious

glorious name ; at which, “ he bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped.” After improving this opportunity in favour of Israel, and receiving some special commands from the Lord, on the tenth day of the month Tisri, with a shining face, and a thankful heart, Moses returned to Israel; having obtained pardon for them, and brought with him the law of God restored, written on the two tables of stone, and a commission to erect, immediately, the tabernacle according to the pattern shewed him in the mount.

THESE were acquisitions of the greatest moment to such among them, who feared God ; as without the divine favour they knew they could neither travel in safety, nor fight with any hope of victory. The people, therefore, were now ready to bring their offerings, which, by the wisdom of Bezaleel, and Aholiab, were made subservient to the purposes God designed. And, to what better purposes could their offerings be applied ? By thus dedicating their substance to God, they were the more secured from idolatry and pride, and saw more of God in it, when the tabernacle was compleated, and the high priest officiated in his robes, than ever they saw before. On, or before the first day of the month Abib, in the following year, the tabernacle was finished ; which being set up, the cloud of glory filled it;

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and God's residence was known to be among them, on the mercy seat, which covered the ark of the testimony. The tabernacle was reared in the wilderness, near mount Sinai, on the first day of the second year of their coming out of Egypt; namely, on the first day of Nisan; when out of it, rules and orders, respecting sacrifices, the priests' consecration, the passover, fasts and feasts, and other laws were given. It is remarkable, that on giving the ceremonial, as before on giving the moral law, an horrible offence was committed, and awful destruction followed. Nadab and Abihu, though so lately indulged to see, and eat before Jehovah, and now so highly exalted in office, "took either of them his censor, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out a fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." It does not appear they had any command to make an offering at this time; what they officiously attended to, it is thought, pertained to their father; it is certain, that common fire was unlawful to be used on this occasion, and that which is unlawful, is, by the Lord, accounted strange and abominable: and if, as some think, they added intemperance and insolence; to their daring innovation, their crime was

highly aggravated, and you must confess their death was as just as it was awful. From this sad event, you see, that privileges, however great, carnal descent, however noble, and offices, however exalted, are no security to transgressors. "God will not be mocked," but sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified. With him, innovation in his worship, however ingenious, or plausible, is rebellion; and false zeal, however it may be applauded by some, is an abomination. Numb. x. On the first day of the second month, having erected the tabernacle, they pitched their camp, and numbered the people. The number of the people, exclusive of the Levites, and of those under twenty years of age, was now 603,550 men. But of this number, (though none of them were enfeebled by age) *two* only, were permitted to enter the land of Canaan. When the camp was pitched, the sanctuary was set in the middle of it; by which, they were taught, that religion was the heart of the state, and that God was the hope of his people. But I hasten to a conclusion of this long letter.

AFTER the princes had made their offerings to the sanctuary, and after keeping of the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, and the making of silver trumpets for the use of the army, (which were made much about this time;) Moses received a visit from Jethro, his father-in-

law;

law; whose story is mentioned, though by way of anticipation, in the eighteenth of Exodus. Jethro brought with him, Zipporah, the wife of Moses, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Moses, notwithstanding his own dignity was so great, went out to meet them in the most respectful manner. After he had done obeisance to his father, and kissed him, they asked each other of their welfare, and came into the tent. Goodness and greatness were so combined in Moses, that an attention to things of the greatest importance, and the most intimate communion with God himself, by no means incapacitated him, or made him unwilling to shew a proper regard to every relative connection. Devotion, if genuine, will shine in every situation, and will at all times teach us benevolence and discretion. As soon as becoming civilities ceased, Moses " told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharoah, and to the Egyptians, for Israel's sake; and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. And Jethro," though of Midian, " rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel." On the morrow, after they had sacrificed, and Aaron, and all the elders of Israel had ate bread with Moses' father-in-law, before God, " Moses sat to judge the people, from the morning unto the evening." Jethro, who highly approved

proved his son's piety, thought him in this instance not prudent. "Thou wilt surely," says he to Moses, "wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now" continued he, "to my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee. Be thou for the people to Godward; that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and thou shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fiftys and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge. So shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall go to their place in peace." This was wise, and wholesome, and modest advice; and Moses, being possessed of that wisdom which is "gentle, and easy to be intreated," properly availed himself of it; for, "he hearkened to the voice of his father-in-

law,

law, and did all that he said." Moses was so far from being offended with his father because of the counsel he had given him, that, on the contrary, he seems to have been charmed with Jethro's wisdom, and was very desirous to detain him. He said to his father-in-law, " We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my kindred." Moses, loth to lose him, said, " Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." Moses, however, could not prevail with Jethro to go with them; he therefore consented to his departure; " and Jethro went his way into his own land." But his posterity, afterwards known by the name of the Rechabites, are mentioned in the book of Judges, as dwelling with Judah. Judg. i. 16. I am sensible, some apprehend, that it was not Jethro but Hobab, his son, with whom Moses was so unfortunate to continue with him; but, I own, it seems more probable to me, that it was Jethro himself.

LETTER XI.

AS we are going to take our leave of Mount Sinai, where so many laws were given, and for which, you may not see any particular occasion, it may be proper to observe, once for all, that we ought not to judge of any person's conduct, much less ought we to judge of our Maker's, without considering the character he sustains ; and what is the true design of his actions. This shews, how unfit we often are to be judges of the conduct of others, and how unwise, not to say how wicked it is, to censure what we do not understand. When the conduct of any person is most approved by them who know him best, provided they are persons of whose integrity we need have no question, it is a strong argument in his favour ; and this, you will remember, is an universal and standing plea for the character and conduct of the blessed God ; for, in every age, they, who know him best, admire him most. At this period, Moses, among men, was best acquainted with his Maker ; with whose conduct he was as much charmed, as some others were chagrined. After all

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all his labour and travels in the wilderness, notwithstanding he was not permitted to enter Canaan, he thus sums up his view of the divine character : “ He is a rock, his work is perfect : for all his ways are judgment ; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

As I have not any thing more at heart in all my labours, than the endearing of God to my fellow-creatures, it cannot be supposed, that I can have this at any time more in view, as far as the subject will admit, than when I am writing to my son. Allow me therefore, to add, that God sustained three characters to the people of Israel, afterwards, called Jews ; the knowledge of which is necessary, if you would see the propriety of his conduct to that people. 1. He may be considered as the universal Creator of all men, and as the Lord God and Ruler of the souls and consciences of all, and of the Jews, as a part of mankind ; and under this character he required of the Jews all the duties of the light of nature, or the moral law, which obliged all mankind as well as them, and that under every dispensation. 2. He may be considered as the God of Israel, or the Jews, as a church outward and visible ; whom he had separated from the rest of the nations to be a peculiar people to himself ; and so he prescribed to them peculiar forms of worship, and special ceremonies

and

and rites of religion, as tokens of their duty, and his grace. 3. He may be considered as the proper King of the Israelites, as a nation, and as they were his subjects ; and so he gave them judicial or political laws, which relate to their government, and the common affairs of the civil law. The three branches of this distinction of the Jewish laws in the main are evident enough, though they happen to be intermingled in some instances. See, Dr. Watts's short view of the whole Scripture History. Let us now pursue our narrative.

ON the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud of glory was taken up, and the camp removed from Sinai to the wilderness of Paran. The order in which the 12 tribes moved, is mentioned in the xith of Numbers. " And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days journey : and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered ; and let them that hate thee, flee before thee ! And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel ! "

FROM

FROM mount Sinai, they came to Kibroth-hattaavah, that is, the graves of lust: so called, because there, they buried the people that lusted; from which, all they had seen, and heard, and promised at the holy mount, did not restrain them. This lusting began among the mixed multitude; and at last, became pretty general; by which, great numbers were consumed: some say 23,000, but perhaps in this number we are to include those who were destroyed by the devouring flame at Taberah. The graves which are dug by lust in its various forms, are more numerous in every age than most imagine. Inglorious exit! An end like this, methinks, should make the most brutal blush. Their next stage was Hazeroth; where they abode, at least, seven days. At this place, Moses was exercised with a new, and indeed, with a severe trial; for “Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses, because of the Ethiopian woman, whom he had married;” and whom Jethro, her father, had lately brought to his tent, with her two sons. When she first came, you remember, they paid her a visit, and seemed pleased with the interview. But when they found Zipporah continued with Moses, and that he treated her with respect, this excited the envy of Miriam: and Aaron, though a great and good man, was weak enough, at this time,

time, to listen to the insinuations and invectives of his jealous sister. In this unguarded moment, they said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it." Moses, so eloquent in the cause of God, is now silent in his own. But God spake for him, in a manner that did him the highest honour. "Were ye not afraid," said he to Miriam and Aaron, "to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed." The tokens of his displeasure also appeared, by the departure of the cloud from the tabernacle, and by striking Miriam with the leprosy. When Aaron beheld his sister "white as snow," with this loathsome disease, he said to Moses, "Alas! my Lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned." Actions, when done, frequently appear very different to us, than they did before they were finished. When Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses, no doubt, they thought themselves wise; now, they say, "We have done foolishly." Moses, who "was very meek, above all men which were upon the face of the earth," was easily intreated by his brother Aaron. He prayed for Miriam, and was successful. And after she was healed, and mortified by being shut out

out of the camp for “ seven days,” the children of Israel “ removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.”

THIS wilderness was “ great and horrible;” and when they came to Rithmah, which some suppose to be the same place with Kadesh Barnea, in or near the wilderness of Paran, and which Dr. Wells distinguishes from another Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, they continued there an whole year, as they had before at Sinai. They were now near the borders of Canaan ; and but “ eleven days journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir.” Deut. i. 2. Towards the latter end of this year, when the grapes and figs were ripe, the twelve spies were sent to search the land. The charge they received was, “ to see the land what it is, and the people that dwell therein ; whether they be strong or weak, few or many ; and what the land is they dwell in ; whether it be good or bad ; and what cities they be that they dwell in ; whether in tents, or in strong holds ; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean ; whether there be wood therein, or not.” The report of the spies on their return to the camp, we had occasion to mention before. Here, we may observe, that the judgment of multitudes unavoidably depended on the report of twelve men ; from which, and many other circumstances in life, we see,

what confidence is sometimes placed in moral testimony, and the vast importance men of knowledge and integrity are to society, both in a civil and religious view. Happy had it been for Israel, if these spies had been such: but alas! there were but two out of the twelve, that deserved this character. These were Joshua and Caleb; the former of the tribe of Ephraim, and the latter of the tribe of Judah. But what were these among so many? They could not be heard. Nay, the congregation commanded them to be stoned for their faithful testimony. Numb. xiv. 10. But they soon found, as Solomon expresses it, that, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint."

THE triumph of error and disobedience, is always short; but not always, so short as in the present instance. God saw, and, as might be expected, highly resented their conduct. For, notwithstanding they had seen his glory, and his miracles which he did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and had frequently heard his testimony respecting Canaan, they had now tempted the Lord no less than ten times, and did not hearken to his voice; so many were the inexcusable instances of their disobedience in less than two years! David, reflecting on the events

events before us, says, “ For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wonderous works. Therefore, their days did he consume in vanity and their years in trouble.” This was literally true ; for after the number of the days in which they searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, they bore their iniquities, even forty years ; and were made to know God’s breach of promise. The unfaithful spies, and many who placed more confidence in them, than in any thing the Lord had said, died by the pestilence ; which perhaps might give occasion for Moses to say, in what is now called the xth Psalm, “ We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled.” The age of man being now reduced to a very short period, he adds, “ The days of our years are threescore years and ten ; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength, labour and sorrow ; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Judge then, how afflicting it was to be doomed to wander more than half this period in the wilderness, without the least hope of ever entering into that land for which they left Egypt ; and which they then expected to enter in a few days. “ But with whom was he grieved forty years ? was it not with them who had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness ? And to whom

whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief."

THE manner in which we are taught to improve this part of our history, you may see, in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. But far, very far, from improving this event in such a manner, or indeed, from improving it at all, the children of Israel, from one act of disobedience, proceeded immediately to another.

When commanded to enter Canaan, with the promise of the Divine presence and special protection, they absolutely refused to go, and said one to another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt;" but when they were forbidden, they said, "Lo we be here, and we will go to the place the Lord hath promised." In vain were they warned of their approaching danger, for presumption knows no bounds. The ark and Moses continued in the camp; yet they, who so lately refused to march with them, in the face of the enemy, were now resolved to ascend the hill alone. False courage, and the want of any, are equally injurious and inglorious. As for this rash event, the issue was, as might be expected, confusion and distress. "The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which

dwell in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them even unto Hormah."

SOME laws were now given concerning those who, at a future period, should enter the land of promise; for, the unbelief of some, did not make the promise of possessing Canaan, of no effect. It was now, that Korah, Dathan and Abiram, three daring incendiaries, manifested their disaffection to the will and wisdom of God, by thus insulting his servants and magnifying themselves: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" The mistake of these offenders evidently originated from pride, and a thirst of dominion; yet, to obtain their wishes, they preached up the plausible, popular doctrine of unlimited equality among all in the camp; who are said to be "all holy, every one of them;" from whence they inferred, Moses and Aaron had taken too much upon them, and that it was their duty, for the good of the public no doubt, to bring them down to their original and common level. But when did Moses and Aaron take so much upon them as these rash reformers? who, not content with being separated from the congregation of Israel to minister unto them, tumultuously

tuously sought to obtain the priesthood, and the government of the whole nation. With Korah, were united 250 princes of the assembly, "famous in the congregation, men of renown :" yet this grand combination, as perhaps they thought it, received no higher title from the wisdom of God, than "Korah and his company ;" whose confederacy ended as awfully as their conduct was assuming.—' A person's right to resist,' says a modern author of some esteem, "depends upon a conviction that the government is ill managed : that others have more claim to manage it, or will administer it better : that he, by his resistance, can introduce a change to its advantage, and this without any consequential evils that will bear proportion to the said advantage.'—But conspirators have neither patience nor prudence, so to proceed. And, in the present case, it is plain the conduct of Korah and his company was considered as mutinous, and their specious pretences, to reform abuses, were deemed rebellion.

WHEN Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, before him, they said, "We will not come up :" and added, "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself alto-

gether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards; wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up." Possibly, this profane speech, in which it is hard to say, whether insolence or falsehood most prevails, was at first considered as a spirited remonstrance; and so indeed it was; but surely, it is easy to conceive from what spirit such language proceeds. What seems astonishing in this affair is, that after Korah and his company were destroyed, and all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, saying, "Lest the earth swallow us up also;" on the morrow, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron! saying, "ye have killed the people of the Lord." They who will neither see nor hear, must, in the end, feel their folly. This rebellious company were made to feel theirs severely; for no less than 14,700 died of the plague or pestilence, besides those who, as Jude expresses it, "perished in the gainsaying of Core."

THAT it might be yet more evident that the priesthood was to be confined to the house of Levi, that the succession of high priests were to be among

among the sons of Aaron, and, that the priesthood should flourish when Aaron was no more, “ Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod a-piece, for each prince one, according to their fathers houses, even twelve rods : and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses laid up their rods before the Lord, in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass, that, on the morrow, Moses went into the tabernacle of witness ; and behold the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds ! And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel : and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, bring Aaron’s rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels ;” and there Aaron’s rod, with the pot of manna, remained for many ages. The people, as usual, were in great fear where no fear was : and they said unto Moses, “ Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish ! Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the Lord, shall die : shall we be consumed with dying ?”

IF the conduct of these men appear to you unaccountable, as in some instances no doubt it

does, you are to remember, that which precipitated them into many acts of disobedience, was the inordinate regard they had to sensual pleasures ; they were for ever dreaming of milk and honey, or of gratifications and indulgencies, mean and sordid ; but, for intellectual pleasures and moral enjoyments, for pure and undefiled religion, many of them had little, if any taste ; to these substantial pleasures, many of them, I fear, had a settled aversion : hence their murmurs, their remonstrances, their rebellions, their frequent chastisements and increasing fears ; hence too, their hypocritical services. “ When he slew them, then they sought him : and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues ; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.” They who must be bribed to forsake sin and serve God, having no delight in either for their own sake, are ever fickle and false, and very soon wearied of both. Happy those few of another spirit, who, being separated from surrounding pagans, to serve God, made him their chief joy ! To these, God was “ All and in all ;” to those, except in their distress, or on the

return

return of some remarkable deliverance, or the revival of some carnal expectation, their idols were every thing ; and, consequently, the true God and eternal life, by them, was either unknown, or else despised. I hope, by this remark, you will be able to discern that there is an essential difference between religion, and that which is falsely so called ; and if you do, you must own it is foolish and wicked, in any, to be prejudiced against the one because the other is sometimes called by the same name.

LETTER XII.

THE priesthood being confirmed, as you have heard, to Aaron and his sons, some special services for the priests were now appointed. When, having abode at Kadesh, or Rithmah, many days, even a year, as at Sinai, the command was, "turn ye, and take your journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red sea." Reluctant as they were to comply with this command, after they had struggled in vain with the Amalekites, "who discomfited them," as you have heard, "even to Hormah;" and after they found the Lord "would not hearken to their voice," they turned, and took their journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red sea, as the Lord commanded Moses," (Deut. i. 44—46. and ii. 1.) Only, be it observed, that by the way of the Red sea, you are now to understand, the way to that part of it which was near Ezion-gaber, and not to imagine they went back to the place where they crossed it when they came out of Egypt..

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THEIR journeys from Kadesh-barnea, from whence the spies were sent to search the land, to their coming to this place again, or, as others will have it, to their being brought to another Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, are mentioned in the xxxiid of Numbers. The names of the several places through which they passed, or at, or near which they made some stay, are these: Libnah, Rissah, Kehelathah, Mount Shaper, Haradah, Makheloth, Tahath, Tarah, Mithcah, Hashmonah, Moseroth, Benejaakan, Hor-hagid-gad, Jotbathah, Ebronah, and Ezion-gaber. The events attending these journeys, or wanderings, are few and obscure; if however we cannot sing of their exploits, the justice and mercy of God are inexhaustible subjects, and in every period worthy our praise. The cloud of glory abode with them; manna also continued to fall in its appointed season; the waters of Horeb followed them from stage to stage; and their cloaths waxed not old, nor were their feet weary: yet the hand of the Lord was against that stubborn generation, “to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.” And before they arrive the second time at Kadesh-barnea, or, as Dr. Wells supposes, before they came to Kadesh in Zin, (which they did not in less than 38 years from their first coming to Rithmah,) “all the

men of war," except Caleb and Joshua, " were consumed and died among the people."

ON the first month of the fortieth year after their departure from Egypt, the whole congregation came to the wilderness of Zin, and the people abode in Kadesh ; where Miriam died and was buried ; being more than 120 years old. Another rebellion now broke out ; concerning which, Moses and Aaron acted such a part, as was the occasion of their being excluded the Land of Promise. This event is worthy your notice.

THE occasion of their present murmurings, like most of the former, was, a predominant concern to gratify their appetite for earthly enjoyments ; for which, it should seem, the present generation had as strong a gust as the former. "Would to God," say they, "that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." Are you not shocked at their impiety ? But they who live without thought, frequently die without reflection. "It is no place" they add, "of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink." But why were they yet in this place ? or for what reason were they sent from Kadesh before ? Facts often deeply affect us, nay, sometimes most deeply affect us, when the true cause of things being as

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we find them, is most out of sight. This, in common, leads to a fatal mistake ; for instead of being humbled under the mighty hand of God, and considering how present afflictions may be removed with honour, or borne with patience, in such circumstances, we generally increase our guilt, and so multiply our difficulties.

ONCE more the Lord relieved them ; but Moses, all meek as he was, now found his patience exhausted. He took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him, but he did not use it as he was commanded ; for, in his impatience, he said. “ Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock ? And Moses lift up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice : and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel ; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”—It is supposed, and it is no improbable supposition, that the temptation of Moses and Aaron at this time, was, an apprehension they should never be able to conduct the people to Canaan : because they supposed, whenever they approached its borders, some renewed act of disobedience among the people would send

them back again into the wilderness ; just as they were sent from Kadesh before. ‘ What ! ’ said they, to the rebellious, “ Must we fetch water out of this rock also ? When we were at Horeb, the waters gushed out, and followed us in all our wanderings to this hour. It is true they now fail ; but are we not on the borders of Canaan ? and should we not think of entering into the land of promise, where every want will be supplied, rather than by another miracle to obtain water ? for, should we be supplied, we shall certainly be doomed to follow its endless meanders as before ; while the continued stream we follow, will be a constant mirror to behold our guilt ; and if this be the case, we must for ever abandon the thoughts of dwelling in Canaan.’ Thus irritated, and, in his haste, not believing the promise of entering Canaan according to the time precisely fixed on their former rebellion at Kadesh, Moses struck the rock in wrath, and did not sanctify God in the eyes of the people ; therefore, it was unto him and Aaron his brother according to their unbelief ; who, on this account, were not permitted to bring the congregation into the land which God had given them : though bishop Hall was of opinion, that Moses by striking the rock, to which he was only commanded to speak, committed that act of disobedience for which he was excluded the promised inheritance. Whatever was.

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the cause, from this event, we learn that no man is of such importance to the ALMIGHTY, but he can carry on his greatest designs, whenever he pleases, as well without his assistance as with it. We may also conclude, that, since two of the most holy persons among all the tribes of Israel, were excluded Canaan, the possession of it was never intended by the Lord, as the ultimate, or final rest of his people. After the conquest of Canaan, there still remained, as there does now, "a rest for the people of God."

THIS rest Aaron was soon called to enjoy. At Mount Hor, Moses first received the solemn, and perhaps, unexpected notice of his departure. "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up into Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded."

WHAT an affecting sight was this to the whole congregation! What a journey to Moses, Aaron and

and Eleazar ! With solemn steps and slow, revolving in their minds former and present scenes, they ascended Mount Hor. At length, they reached its summit ; where Aaron was deprived of his garments, but not degraded. When he died, the sacred character, which he sustained, still lived : and lived too, in his eldest son. Eleazar, on his entrance into this high office, could not but see, that man was frail and mortal ; that God was wise and gracious ; wise in shewing his detestation against disobedience, without partiality ; and gracious, not only in pardoning the disobedient, but in conferring the highest honour on his posterity. If therefore, on his being invested with Aaron's robes, he felt the least temptation to pride, the manner, the time, and the occasion of his being invested with them, were an antidote against it ; and doubtless, these circumstances were considered by him, as so many powerful pleas for humility and circumspection. Thus habited and honoured, Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. " And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." — It seldom happens, that a great man dies but there is an immediate resurrection in the minds of many, of his character and conduct, and of their own behaviour towards him while

while he was yet alive. This resurrection, if I may so call it, is to some pleasing, to others painful, and to most, an occasion both of pain and pleasure; the mourning therefore, so common at funerals, should never be estimated according to its being loud, or long, but by the effects it produces; by our avoiding such things, in future, which then give us such pain in reflection, and by pursuing those, which, in so solemn an hour, yield us substantial pleasure.

AARON was the son of Amram, of the tribe of Levi, and the elder brother of Moses. He was an eloquent man, and the mouth of Moses to the people. Moses excelled in wisdom, Aaron in utterance. Thus the two brothers were dependent on each other; and both of them on God. Aaron was the first who was called to be an High Priest; which order continued in the tribe of Levi, through successive generations, till it gave way to the superior order of Melchisedec, in the person, and appearing of Jesus Christ. It must be owned, before he sustained this august character, as well as after, his indiscretion was manifest; yet, it is certain, Aaron's conduct, on the whole, was so consistent, amiable and useful, that he lived and died "the saint of the Lord."

A PLEASING dawn of hope succeeded the general mourning which was occasioned by the death

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of Aaron. Arad the Canaanite, who now opposed Israel, and, at first, with success, was entirely vanquished. “ The Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites: and they utterly destroyed them and their cities.” But this dawn of hope, was soon obscured by a cloud of guilt. Israel not being permitted to pass through the land of Edom because the Lord had given Mount Seir to Esau, and his posterity, for a possession, was obliged, in order to avoid it, to make a tedious circuit by the wilderness of Zin to Zalmonah. “ And the souls of the people were much discouraged because of the way.” Again, they murmured; and now, not only for what they wanted, but at what they had. They “ loathed the manna,” and called it, “ light bread.”—We cannot multiply our crimes more, than God, if he pleases, can multiply our sorrows. Armed with his commission, the feeblest of creatures become formidable; and without it, the most ferocious cease to be furious: to Daniel, lions were lambs; but, to Pharaoh, frogs and flies, locusts and lice, were more terrible than beasts of prey. Now, fiery serpents received their commission to chastise Israel, whose severe reflections on Moses, causeless as severe, had pierced to the heart of their meek and patient leader, and had wounded, often wounded, those

who were loyal to God: and “ they bit the people, and much people died.” As their crime and chastisement were singular, so was their cure. The Lord said unto Moses, “ Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.” If any who were bitten, refused to look on the brazen serpent, no matter from what motive, “ they died.” But, if their consciences were not feared, what kind of death think you did they die? ‘ I have sinned,’ might such an one have said, ‘ or I had not been stung; and had I not added sin to sin, had I not sinned by rejecting the only mean of cure, as at first, by walking contrary to divine counsel, and by preferring my own wisdom and will to his, my wounds, though grievous, had not been mortal; but now, I find, they are: all who behold me, must say, I die a martyr to my own folly. But death will ease me from the serpent’s sting: the fuel that feeds the present flame, will then be consumed. Come then, thou messenger of mercy—what have I said? too soon he comes to me, who comes in vain; who comes only to augment my woe! Dreadful exchange! to quit the serpent’s for the scorpion’s sting! the present burning, for a never dying flame! But if you would improve this passage to better purpose, and make

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a personal, and proper application of this remarkable event, read our Lord's comment on this part of our history, when conversing with Nicodemus, in the third of John.

L E T -

LETTER XIII.

FROM Zalmonah, the place of the image, so called from the brazen serpent, which was an image of the fiery ones, they removed to Punon, to Oboth, and Ije-Abarim, in the border of Moab. While they passed by the wilderness of Moab, the Lord said unto Moses, "Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot," who was the father of Moab, "for a possession." Receiving this prohibition, they passed the valley of Zared; when it appeared, all the congregation numbered at Sinai, except the two before noticed, were dead. They were also forbidden to meddle with the children of Ammon, the descendants of another of the incestuous sons of Lot, for the same reason as they were forbidden to meddle with Moab. But, at the same time that they were commanded not to molest either Moab or Ammon, or to make war against them, or take any of their territories; they were expressly commanded never to make peace, or enter into any alliance with them, or promote

promote their well-being, by any means whatsoever; or so much as to admit any of them into the congregation of Israel to the tenth generation, Deut. xxiii. 3, 4, 5, 6. Now, as Dr. Delany in his life of David justly observes, these are parts of the sacred history which demonstrate at once their own truth, and divine origin. For, as that fine writer adds, ' It never yet made any part of human policy, never to have either peace or war with a neighbour nation; and much less, neither to invade or conquer a weaker hostile nation, notwithstanding the most grievous provocations, already more than half subdued by their own fears, when it could be done with great ease, and to great advantage. Such conduct can only be accounted for by supposing they acted under divine direction, and that they inviolably regarded it; contrary to the dictates of human prudence, and resolutely deaf, equally so, to the charms of self-interest and the loudest calls of personal resentment.'

LET us farther observe, that the plain and positive prohibitions Israel received not to molest Edom, Moab and Ammon, with the reason annexed to these prohibitions, is a striking instance of the faithfulness of God; and shew us how careful he is to preserve that right which is founded

founded on his own gift. And may we not from hence conclude, that those nations which were devoted to destruction, had no better right to the lands they so long enjoyed, than that of conquest and possession, and a power to defend the conquests they had made?

THE camp of Israel not daring to molest Moab or Ammon, their king commanding them at this time, not to touch them, peaceably passed by their coasts to Dibon-gad, and crossed the river Arnon; when, the declaration and command of their heavenly king was thus expressed: “Behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle.” And, to encourage them to contend with the Amorites, “This day, saith the Lord, will I begin to put the dread of thee, and the fear of thee, upon the nations which are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.”—After they had crossed the Arnon, which then was the border of Moab, they went to Almon-Diblathaim, and from thence to Beer; where they meet with a promised, and pleasing supply of water. The manner in which they obtained this supply, and their song on that occasion, are among the many convincing proofs

proofs that have been given, that among all temporal blessings, the most common, however we forget it when we abuse them, are the most important. But it is thought, and not without some foundation, that the song which was sang on this occasion, alluded to blessings still more important. Isa. xii. 3.

FROM the well Beer, they journied by Mattanah, Nahaliel, and Bamoth, to the mountains of Abarim, of which, Nebo was the principal. Here, messengers were sent to Sihon king of Heshbon, who refused them a passage through his land, and came to Jahaz to give them battle. The message sent to Sihon, contained "words of peace," (Deut. ii. 26.) which being rejected, they had full right to contend with him; over whom, they soon obtained a victory. The text informs us, that, "Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof. For, Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon."—It is worth your

notice, that, as they were forbidden to contend with Moab, who yet deserved to suffer, Moab first falls into the hands of the Amorites, a nation devoted to destruction, and then, both are subdued by Israel. This fact was poetically represented, according to the taste of those times, in proverbs. Poets were then historians; or rather, the history of remarkable events was then preserved by them, who, in a few words, sententiously striking, and poetically strong, first recited their own poems themselves, and then, taught others to repeat them; by these means, memorable actions were anciently preserved and improved. The Amorite poem, on the conquest they obtained over Moab, is still extant, in the book of Numbers, Chap. xxi. 27—31.

THE conquest which Israel gained over the Amorites, with that of "Jaazer and its villages," which followed immediately, was the most signal conquest they had yet obtained, and may be considered, as their taking possession of the promised land, and as a pledge of their future victories. Og, king of Bashan, was soon after this subdued. He dwelt where nature wantoned in her prime. The oaks of Bashan were beautiful; their pastures rich, their cattle numerous, their cities strong, and the people powerful, even to a prodigy. Og, himself, was of the race of the giants.

ants. Unintimidated at Sihon's defeat, he marched, probably with all the force he could muster, in a hostile manner, to meet Israel; determined to stop their progress, and to avenge his country's cause. At Edrei the armies met. Israel seemed to tremble for the event: but, to encourage them, God said to Moses, "Fear him not; for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shall do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon." Animated by this promise, "they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until their was none left alive." Thus by faith, more than by fighting, though not without fighting, they obtained a complete victory, and "possessed his land." I would just observe, that as there were twenty six generations from Adam to Moses, the perpetuity of the divine mercy, is so many times repeated in the cxxxvith psalm; which begins with the wonders of creation, and ends with the mercies of this conquest. See the psalm itself.

As the memorable story concerning Balak and Balaam is now before us, in order of time, and as it is of some length, and worthy our notice, it shall be the subject of the following letter,

LETTER XIV.

ATTER the conquest of Sihon, and Og, the two famous kings of the Amorites, and taking, and securing the possession of their domains, (which were very considerable; for in the kingdom of Og, there were threescore cities, fenced with high walls, gates and bars; besides a great many unwalled towns) after this, the children of Israel set forwards, and pitched in the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan, by Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor, at that time king of Moab, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. He saw and trembled; for, in their doom he read his own. Had he, however, recollected his descent from Lot, or known God's charge concerning Moab, there would have been no occasion for his being thus alarmed. But through ignorance, and want of reflection, he and his people gave way to tormenting fears; to fears which led them, I should say, precipitated them into the most unwarrantable practices; and those practices, in the end, brought upon them inevitable destruction. Balak, in his panic, sent

for the elders of Midian, who (notwithstanding their knowledge of Moses, he having dwelt 40 years in Midian, and brought from thence the daughter of Jethro) immediately accepted his invitation, and, when they came to Balak, concurred with him in the most unnatural and unmanly conspiracy against Israel. This step, as might be expected, was fatal to each of them. Soon as they arrived, Balak said, “Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.” The debates of this assembly, if there were any, are not preserved, but the resolution they came to, which seems to have passed *nem. con.* as we say, was this: “To send messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him” to their assistance; “saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest, is blessed, and he whom thou cursest, is cursed.”

WHAT alarmed Balak, you see, was, the number of Israel, and their dwelling so near him; but

but what most alarmed him, I think, was, his judging of Israel's intention from what he supposed would be his own in their situation. This, in my opinion, was the secret, and continual spring of Balak's distress, which filled his mind with painful apprehensions of approaching ruin.—If at any time, like the unjust Judge, we should be so wicked as neither to fear God nor regard man, self-interest, if properly considered, would constrain us to cultivate a benevolent disposition, and to watch against every thing that is injurious towards others: because, as our disposition and conduct towards others are, when they are in our power, we naturally expect that their behaviour will be to us, when we are in their's. It is easy to observe, that those who are not to be credited, are themselves, on that very account, the most reluctant to credit others in any matter of importance. Hence it is, I think, that many in the wilderness, and many in the land of Canaan, perished in unbelief. This is not, indeed, the only pillar of infidelity; but, though generally out of sight, it is, I apprehend, one of the chief.—What I have said of the want of integrity, and confidence, will apply to other, if not to all the corruptions of the human heart. The impure, and intemperate, can hardly imagine that purity and temperance exist in any, but much more difficult is it for them to believe,

that others have a real aversion to those things which they themselves so much approve. They think it strange if any run not with them to the same excess of riot.

BUT having attended to Balak's fears, and the cause of them, to his counsel, and the resolution formed, let us now observe, what were his wishes, and what his expectation. His wishes were, first, to lay Israel under a general curse, and then, to destroy them. The former, he expected from Balaam, and the latter, (could he prevail on Balaam to curse the people,) he hoped to accomplish himself. Pleased with this horrid plan, he was resolved to have it executed as soon as possible. For that purpose, the elders of Moab, and of Midian, "with the rewards of divination in their hand," were immediately dispatched to Balaam; who, far from being offended either at the inhumanity or blasphemy of their petition, requested them to continue with him till the morning; and to engage them to do this, he declared his purpose to wait on God, and promised to bring them word again, as the Lord should speak unto him. But surely, not any thing short of the most inexcusable ignorance of the Divine Character, or, the highest contempt of it, could ever have inspired him with such a purpose, or engaged him to have made such a promise. Perhaps I am wrong;

perhaps, he who exalted himself by judicially hardening Pharoah's heart, was now determined, in a manner I cannot account for, to magnify himself by the madness of this monster.

A FEW hours after Balaam had thus taken the name of the Lord in vain, God came to him, and said, "What men are these with thee? And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth; Come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."

WHEN Balaam pretended to make a report of what he had heard, to the messengers, who waited, with impatience, we may suppose, for his answer; his treachery was great. It is true, he said to them, "Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." But he did not deliver his message in such plain and strong expressions as it was delivered to him; he did not say, he was forbidden to curse the people; much less did he declare, that God had blessed them. Besides, I don't know that we shall do him any injustice if we suppose, that his counter-

nance, the tone of his voice, and his general behaviour, were such, as gave the princes of Balak great reason to question his sincerity, and to conclude, that, though he refused to go with them, his refusal did not proceed from piety but from policy. They knew he was fond of honour, and of such emoluments as they had to bestow, and they took it for granted, it seems, that an increase of each, would easily and effectually overcome the Sorcerer's scruples. On their return, it was, therefore, resolved, to send yet again, and to increase the number and dignity of the messengers, and to promise Balaam a greater reward for his labour. Happy would it be if some men were half as zealous to do good as others are to do evil ! This resolution, like the former, was immediately executed ; and when the second messengers came to Balaam, they said unto him, " Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor : Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me, for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatever thou sayest unto me. Come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Balaam was no more offended with this message, than with the former ; for though he declared, " If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less

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or more," it looks like the language of regret. For, notwithstanding this declaration, he immediately added, "I pray you, tarry ye also this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more."—He who tempts God torments himself. Balaam found it so. The Lord came to him at night, and said, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet, the word which I shall say unto thee, that thou shalt do." It implies no contradiction, though God declared he should not go with the first messengers, that he should permit him, under peculiar restraints, to go with the second: but Balaam's readiness to faddle his ass, and to go with the princes of Moab, is more expressive of his attachment to the "wages of unrighteousness," than of any regard he had to the will of God, or knowledge of his designs: therefore, "God's anger was kindled because he went; and the Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." What followed was very singular.

"Now he was riding upon his ass," it is said, "and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand:" that is, I presume, the ass saw that which terrified her, and which afterward appeared to be the

angel of the Lord, as above described. Balaam, absorbed perhaps in contemplation, and enjoying, in idea, the reward promised him, did not perceive his danger.—This was not the only time that such iniquitous reveries have made man more stupid than a beast.—The Visionary, being thus awakened from his golden dream, was offended with his ass, and smote her, to turn her into the way. But “the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crusht Balaam’s foot against the wall. And he smote her again.” He who beholds an avenging sword, and does not endeavour to avoid it, makes himself contemptibly stupid; the most sordid ass, in such circumstances, is a stranger to his stupidity.—The text informs us, that, “the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam. And Balaam’s anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.” At length, as Peter expresses it, Balaam “was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice, forbad the madness of the prophet.”—When our way, like Balaam’s, is perverse before the

the Lord, we are too often, like him, offended with those events, which, if we understood, we should be constrained to admire.—When Balaam was thus rebuked, “ If it displease thee,” said he to the angel, “ I will get me back again :” and I am willing to suppose, that, if he had repented of his crime, and confessed it with contrition ; and had been as willing to go back, as he had been to undertake that fatal journey, all this would have been acceptable to God, and safe for him. But this was not the case ; he therefore journey’d forward. When, by the long-suffering of God, he arrived at the borders of Moab, Balak met him, and conducted him to Kirjath-huzoth, the city of streets. Here “ Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and the princes who were with him. —On the morrow,” he “ brought him up into the high places of Baal,” where groves were planted, and altars erected to that filthy idol ; which some think was the same with Bacchus or Priapus. One end of bringing Balaam to that place, was, that “ thence, he might see the utmost part of the people.”

IN this situation, Balaam began his enchantments against Israel. After the first, he turned back, “ took up his parable, and said, Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come,

curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed ? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied ? For, from the top of the rocks, I see him, and from the hills I behold him : lo ! the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel ? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his !”

BALAK was astonished at his parable ; and, not considering who put it in his mouth, said, “ What hast thou done unto me ? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.” However, another enchantment was tried ; the place too was changed ; but, God is “ not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent ;” therefore the second parable, was no more acceptable to Balak than the first.

WHEN Balaam had finished this parable, a parable which he himself did not understand, Balak said, “ Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all :” meaning, that if he could not, or would not curse them, to prevent, if possible, his blessing them : for, that his mind was no more reconciled to Israel, is evident, from the following request : “ Come, I pray thee,” said he

he to Balaam, and “ I will bring thee to another place ; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence. And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh towards Jeshimon.—And when Balaam saw that it pleased God to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lift up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes, and the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam, the son of Beor, hath said, and the man whose eyes are open, hath said : He hath said, who heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open : How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob ! and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as the cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the waters out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt, he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn : he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion,

and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee!"

BALAK was now touched to the quick. He could contain his resentment no longer. His "anger was kindled against Balaam," he "smote his hands together," and said unto him, "I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore, now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee to great honour, but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour."—Balaam's apology, prediction and advice, followed. In his apology and prediction, he mentioned truth with regret; in his pernicious advice, which was to tempt those he could not curse, he was, alas! sincere and successful.

I HAVE now opened a door to an hundred reflections, but I have neither room in this letter, nor leisure, at present, for twenty. Let me then abridge the matter. From what I have recited, you see, an unbelieving believer, so I call Balak, sending for a soothsayer to curse a people who had no intention to distress him; and thereby, bringing upon himself the destruction he studied to avoid, and which he sought, in vain, to have brought on Israel. With him, faith in the true God, was folly; and therefore, despised; but

but faith in a fool, (I said a fool, because God considers wickedness as the fountain of folly) this, with Balak, was wisdom; and therefore esteemed.—He sent indeed for Balaam with great parade, and paid him many fine compliments; but it is easy to perceive, he, all along, intended to honour himself; for when Balaam refused to gratify his desires, he let him know, that Balak was his superior, and that he might esteem it no small favour if he permitted him to depart in peace.—On the other hand, Balaam, poor wretch! had violent struggles between conscience and inclination; “the wages of unrighteousness” attracted his attention, but the word and providence of God, prevented his seizing the glittering prize.—“Wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse.” After repeated warnings, and singular discoveries, nay, after his being constrained to bless them whom he could have wished to curse, he left behind him such pernicious counsel as will render his name infamous to the latest posterity. Pernicious however, as Balaam’s advice was, it would have been as harmless to Israel as his curse, had it been equally detested. I beseech you, therefore, “Do yourself no harm!” and assure you, that they who properly regard this caution, have nothing to fear from either the enchantments, the curse, or counsel of the ungodly.

LETTER XV.

THESE are certain seasons in which some people had rather be conquered than conquer. This, pretend what we will to the contrary, this, is always the case, when knowing what is evil we commit it. In this inglorious situation we behold Israel, soon after Balaam's departure; for it is said, "the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab." From carnal, they proceeded to spiritual fornication. "They called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself to Baalpeor :" And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Not less than 24 thousand of these infatuated idolaters died of the plague which God sent among them; which at last was stayed by the zeal of Phineas. This young man, who was the son of Eleazar, and the grand-son of Aaron, saw with becoming indignation, a sight he could not bear. For, while the wrath of God was upon them, and while Moses, and all

all the congregation of Israel, “ were weeping before the door of the tabernacle,” he beheld “ Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites,” bringing “ a Midianitish woman, Cozbi, the daughter of Zur,” into his tent, for the basest purpose. This impious act was as public as it was flagrant; for all this was done in the presence of Moses, and the whole assembly. Fired with zeal for God, not with personal resentment, and availing himself, probably, of those remarkable declarations that were now made, (see Numbers xxv. 4, 5.) by which, under proper limitations, every man became a magistrate to execute justice, Phineas took his javelin in his hand and while the daring criminals were burning with shameless lust, suddenly he thrust them through; and thus “ turned wrath away from the children of Israel.” This transaction is not written for our imitation, but for our instruction. Read it with this view, and remember, the nature of all crimes is the same, however they may differ in degree, and in some peculiar aggravations. As the nature of sin is ever the same, so is the nature of God’s displeasure against it; and, in due time, all the world shall know it.—Let us adore him then, for his patience and forbearance to us, and intreat, that his goodness may lead us to repentance; lest the avenging power

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of his justice, which bathed the javelin of Phineas in blood, smite us in some sinful act, and we rise no more.

A COMMAND was now given “to vex the Midianites, and smite them ;” but this command, and many that are similar, will neither be understood nor improved, unless you recollect to whom it was given, in what view, and to what end. The command I have mentioned, was given to Israel in their political capacity, as the ministers of the divine displeasure on an abandoned and abominable people. And as the displeasure of God is always just, so we have seen, he has an undoubted right to manifest it by whom, or by what he pleases.—Now, Israel is commanded to vex Midian; at a future period, the Assyrians are “the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation,” against his chosen people. But, under the present dispensation, different ways of manifesting the divine pleasure are adopted; and the certainty and perpetuity of future torments, are more plainly held up to view. The locality of religion, and the peculiarities attending local worship, are now no more. God is no longer considered as dwelling at Jerusalem in Judea, but as God of all the earth. His church is his Jerusalem. And, “in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

him." We are told, "Vengeance is the Lord's," and that "he will repay it." And when we consider, how liable we are to err in attempting such awful work, we should rejoice, that, the power communicated by the gospel, is for edification, and not for destruction. And, I hope, you will always remember, that a power to do good, is unspeakably superior to any extent of power whatever, under any other idea. The meanest and vilest creatures may be, and frequently are, the instruments of vengeance; but they who rejoice to do good, are neither mean nor vile: no, among men, they are the most honourable, and, to God, the most acceptable.

"THE sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old, and upwards," was taken once more, prior to the death of Moses; and, notwithstanding the many mournful instances of mortality that have passed before our eyes, since their departure from Egypt, the number of the children of Israel was found no less, at this time, than six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty; which is only 1820 less than the number taken at Mount Sinai: and is 1730 more than were numbered of the children of Israel when they left Egypt, exclusive of the Levites. It is observable, that one family, in the tribe of Simeon, now appeared to be wanting; namely,

namely, the family of Ohad. Zimri, whose notorious transgression in the matter of Peor, we have just mentioned, was, it seems, of this family ; which, probably, became extinct through his folly, and the vain attempt of his relations to vindicate, or, extenuate his crime.

MANY additional precepts were now given to this new generation, after which, the Midianites were effectually subdued. Twelve thousand Israelites were armed for war on this occasion ; and, with them, went Phineas the son of Eleazar the High Priest, “with the holy instruments, and trumpets to blow in his hand.” The conquest was as complete as the war was just. Five kings were slain, and Balaam, the son of Bosor, fell with them. It is said, the deceiver and the deceived are the Lord’s, and this was not the last time they have fallen and perished together. The captives Israel made, and the spoil which they took from the Midianites, were very considerable ; and what, in such engagements, is very uncommon, not a man was killed, or missing, among the 12 thousand that fought with Midian. The spoil, by divine command, was divided between them who went to the battle, those that staid in the camp, and the Levites, who attended to the service of the sanctuary. The cities, and goodly castles of the Midianites, they burned ; and what they

they took from them, except their cattle, that, according to its nature, was purified, either by fire or water, before they were permitted to use it ; nay the conquerors themselves, were considered as unclean, till they had washed their clothes and had been separated from the camp seven days. If you recollect the different laws the Israelites were under to God, and the foundation of them, mentioned in the 11th letter, you will easily understand what would otherwise appear mysterious in these ceremonies. But now, they may teach us, that, we seldom gain a conquest over others without defiling ourselves ; and, that God would not only have us sensible of it, but, in every age, submit to that method of cleansing which he hath prescribed in his word ; and that it is our duty, by our offerings as well as by our words, publickly to acknowledge, that every deliverance and victory we obtain, is by divine power, and therefore ought to be improved to the divine glory.

THE present victory over the Midianites, and the preceding victory over the Amorites, and over Og king of Bashan, made way for an agreeable settlement for the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and for the half tribe of Manasseh. These tribes "had a very great multitude of cattle, and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead,"

lead," were suitable places for cattle, they requested to have them for their inheritance. And, on condition that they passed over Jordan armed, with their brethren to battle, and that God should crown the arms of Israel with success, so that the land they had chosen should prove, their number considered, to be a proportional part of the whole, on these terms, Moses and the people were willing to grant their request. Assurance being given by the petitioners, that those proposals met with their hearty approbation, the matter was amicably settled ; on which, they made provision for leaving their families and flocks behind them with safety, and then prepared to march with their brethren to the interior parts of Canaan. You will see in this transaction, I hope, a beautiful connection between a due regard for private interest, and public safety. It is lawful, it is commendable, to secure and improve the former, but never to the injury of the latter.

THE words of Moses to the petitioning tribes, deserve your regard. " If," said he, " ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord ; then, afterwards ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel ;

rael ; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord : and be sure your sin will find you out."—God never blesses a nation, a tribe, a family, or an individual, but with a view to the good of others, and the glory of his own Name ; he, therefore, who would live to himself, or expect blessings of any kind, either to the injury of others, or to the dishonour of God, may look for a curse and not a blessing.

LETTER XVI.

THE closing scene in the history of Moses is almost ended. Like all the former scenes in the life of this great man, it is a busy one. Where there is no action, there can be no honour; and he who is not honourable, and conscious of it, cannot be happy. The happiness of God himself, so far as we can conceive, principally consists in a perfect consciousness of his doing every thing that becomes him, and, in no instance, any thing to the contrary. Our happiness, in a general view, consists in the enjoyment of forgiveness with God, for every thing unbecoming in us, and by being conscious we improve the unutterable mercy to the praise of the glory of his grace. For happiness like this, in each view, we are always indebted to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; consequently, our happiness ever bears proportion to our faith in him, and conformity to him. The nature of true happiness never changes; before the law, under it, and in the present dispensation of grace, it remains the same.

same. All men are happy as they know, and approve the true nature, the appointed means, and final end of being so ; and miserable, as these are unknown, neglected, and despised.—But I check the freedom of my pen, and return to our narrative.

BEFORE Moses took his final leave of Israel, he mentioned the boundaries of Canaan, and who were to divide it by lot. He appointed six cities for refuge, and disposed of Zelophehad's daughters. All this, with the recital of their 42 journeys, he did in the plains of Moab, by the commandment of the Lord. And now, “on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab,” Moses rehearsed to Israel, what is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.

IN this book he sings of mercy and of judgment; particularly in his famous song in the xxxii chapter. He is careful to remind Israel, again and again, what God had been to them and to their fathers, and what they and their fathers had been to the Lord. Never was their a contrast more striking; never was such a contrast more pathetically lamented, or, more happily improved. “ Do ye thus requite the Lord ? O foolish people, and unwise ! Is he not thy father, who hath bought

thee ?

thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?" Thus Moses lamented, and mourned over them: but I must transcribe a great part of this book, were I to shew in how many different ways he improved the affecting subject. In general, by all that was pleasing, by all that was painful, by all that was solemn, by all that was sacred, by all that could operate on their fears, their hopes, or on any other affection; he charged them to consider, that, as God only had made them to differ from surrounding nations, so, their being made an holy people unto the Lord, was always to be considered as the most essential difference between them and others, and their remaining such, the only evidence of their continuance in the land of Canaan; assuring them, when they forgot the mercies attending their deliverance and preservation, and the design of the promised conquest, they would defile themselves with the abominations of the heathen; and, that then, their ruin would be inevitable; and so much the more awful and tremendous, as their mercies had been many and great. Attend to his own words:

" SEE," said he, " I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his command-

ments

ments and his statutes and his judgements, that thou mayest live and multiply : and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them ; I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing : therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live : that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him : for he is thy life and the length of thy days : that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swear unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Deut. xxx. 15—20. and in several other places in the end of the same book.

THAT not any thing he said to Israel at this time, might look like personal resentment, or appear to be the peevishness of old age, that he might refresh his mind by blessing them to whom he had been so long a blessing, and thus enter into that joy, which every " good and faithful servant" shall inherit, and from which, all who are not, shall be excluded ; with such views, he

pronounced a parting blessing on the twelve attentive tribes of Israel. In this prophetic, pious act, the tribes are not mentioned according to their seniority, nor as they were mentioned by Jacob when he blessed them. Reuben, however, though he lost his birth right, is mentioned first: to shew us, probably, he was a penitent; and when Moses says, "Let Reuben live, and not die:" it may intimate that neither he, nor any penitent, shall ever die the second death. Judah is mentioned before Levi, it being the royal tribe, and of which, the king Messiah, according to the flesh, was to come.—If you attend to the various blessings, you will find some of them particular to one tribe, others, common to them all. Reuben was to be multiplied; Judah to be strong. Levi was to teach; Benjamin to "dwell in safety;" and Joseph to be fruitful. Zebulun was "to rejoice in his going out, and Issachar in his tents." Gad was to be enlarged to execute justice; and Dan to have the boldness, strength and courage of a "lion's whelp." Naphtali was to be "satisfied with favour," and Asher to "be blessed with children." But the blessings common to the whole were greatest. "The eternal God," says Moses, "is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." And we may say with David, "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"

Moses,

Moses, as well as David, thought so ; for thus he speaks, “ Happy art thou, O Israel ! who is like unto thee ? O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread on their high places.”—All this must be understood of them only, who were “ Israelites indeed !” I mean, in conduct as well as in name ; and it will apply to all such in the present age, as well as in those which are past.

AND now must he leave us ? must this eye in the body of Israel be closed ? this leader of the people depart ? He must. And see, how willingly this man of God leaves the plains of Moab for the mountain of Nebo ! There was life ; here was death : but life and death to Moses, were viewed in him who is the end of both : he endured each, “ as seeing him who is invisible.” This made his life lovely, and his death delightful. “ So Moses the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.”

To judge of any man’s character, you must consider it in three views ; as natural, relative, and moral. In the first view, you may judge of his abilities ; in the second, of his connections ; and in the last, of his excellency. In each view,

the character of Moses is truly great. His natural, and acquired abilities, were very considerable ; his relative connections were honourable ; and his moral conduct, almost unexceptionable. Wherever we view him, greatness and goodness attend his steps. In every situation he shines forth with peculiar rays of glory : yet, like the sun, he never shines for any lower end than to bless mankind, and to proclaim his maker's praise. In the court of Pharoah, in the land of Midian, and "in the waste howling wilderness," he was a light to others, by which they saw God, who were unable to see him, as Moses did, "face to face." Thus indulged, "he feared not the wrath of the king," nor was he fettered by all the honours and treasures of Egypt. He preferred, deliberately preferred, "the reproach of Christ" to both : not for an hour only, but for an age : not in speculation alone, but in the severest trials. It is impossible to say, in what character he most excelled ; for view him in which you please, it is still the present, in which you think you see him to the greatest advantage. When you view him as a judge, you think he should have been nothing else ; when you behold him interceding for Israel, you are ready to say, 'Here, he equally shines.' When you attend to his meekness and patience, under numberless provocations, in this view,

view, you imagine he is incomparable ; yet, when you attend to his actions, 'These,' say you, are imitable.' What then are his writings ? They, you must own, are above all praise. If such was Moses in the wilderness, what is he now ? what think you then of Him, to whom this eminently great and good Man was but a servant, and who always thought this his highest honour ?

LETTER XVII.

IT doubtless gave Moses great pleasure in a dying moment, that he had not only the testimony of a good conscience, but that he left a faithful successor behind him. Such was Joshua; who, though he was the servant of Moses, was appointed to succeed him: and Moses, notwithstanding he had children of his own, cordially approved of his successor. While Moses was yet alive, he “called unto Joshua and said unto him, in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage; for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” This exhortation met with the divine approbation; and, in the form of a charge, was renewed to Joshua by the Lord himself. In the presence of the people, in the tabernacle of the congregation, the charge was thus renewed: “Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land

land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee."

" Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread on, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates; all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it, to the right hand, or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest

observe to do according to all that is written therein : for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee ? Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed : for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

SUCH were the credentials, the command and direction, the caution and encouragement, given to Joshua. Without a clear call and a good conscience, what can any man do for God ? But, with these, what has not been attempted ? what has not been performed ? An attention to God's commands, is both our duty and our strength, and the only way in which the divine presence can be expected and enjoyed. Joshua was to meditate on the revealed will of God, " day and night ;" he was to " observe and do, according to all that was written ;" he was to be, what some would call obstinately right. Thus was he to " be strong and of a good courage," in the exalted character he sustained ; and thus only can we be endued with the same courage and strength in ours.

JOSHUA, who was now the chief ruler under God over the tribes of Israel, immediately attended to business. He " commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you

victuals ;

vituals ; for within three days, ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it." At the same time, he reminded the two tribes and a half of their promise to Moses, (see letter the 15th.) which they acknowledged, and declared they were ready to fulfil. Then Joshua sent two men from Shittim unto Jericho, to "spie secretly ;" and said unto them, "Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there."

THE principal end Joshua had in view, in sending these spies, was not, I apprehend, to make a discovery of the weakest place in the walls of Jericho, in order to know what was the best method of attacking that city, according to the rules of art ; but to learn whether the inhabitants were terrified at the approach of Israel, and on what ground. This end was fully answered ; for, on the return of the spies, they said unto Joshua, "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land ; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us."

WHATEVER Rahab, who received the spies, was, whether "a harlot" properly so called, which seems to be confirmed from the *πόρνη* of St. James (ii.25), though some think her calling only, as an hostess, was disreputable ; it is evident, let this dispute

terminate as it may, her faith, as a gentile, was remarkable ; it exceeded that of thousands among the Israelites, who had seen the wonders of God in Egypt, and who had the best opportunities of hearing his voice. She said unto the men whom she hid in her house, who, before this, seemed not to be concerned for her welfare, “ I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you ; for we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you when you came out of Egypt ; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sion and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you ; for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath.”— Her faith, like Noah’s, was connected with fear ; and her fear, like his, moved her to act for the preservation of herself and family, by embracing the only mean of safety. For this, she “ obtained a good report,” and had her name enrolled among the antient worthies mentioned in the eleventh of Hebrews..

SUPPOSE others at Jericho had believed with Rabab, and as she did, would they not have been preserved

preserved as she was ? I cannot doubt it ; for it is said of her, she “ perished not with them who believed not.” If so, the nations who perished, may be considered, first, as enemies to the moral government of God, by which they were exposed to his wrath ; and secondly, as despisers of his mercy, which brought down indignation to the utmost, on their devoted and defenceless heads.

THE two spies were sent to Jericho, according to Dr. Lightfoot, on the sixth of Nisan, and left it again, that night. On the ninth of the same month, the Israelites marched along the banks of the Jordan, till they came opposite to Jericho. As the cloud of glory was taken away at the death of Moses, the ark of the covenant now went before them. To follow this sacred chest through “ the swelling of Jordan,” (“ for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,”) the people were sanctified. They who were not sanctified with the ark, were not saved by it. As soon as “ the feet of the priests who bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, the waters which came down from above, stood and rose up upon an heap, very far from the city of Adam, that is beside Zaretan : and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off : and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the

ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." When this was done, ("while the priests who bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan") at Joshua's command, "twelve stones" were fixed, at proper distances, in the midst of the river where they stood. These stones, which were probably seen at low water, were designed to keep the miracle of their passing over the Jordan, in memory; and if they were, in common, overflowed, as it would be the constant care of the mariner to avoid them, the mercy and miracle attending Israel's preservation from the "swelling of Jordan," would be no less the subject of conversation, and consequently, no less subservient to the end designed. Miracles, if not remembered, are useless; and, after all the care that has been taken to keep them in memory, if they be not sanctified, they will be remembered to very little purpose. When these stones were fixed, and every thing was finished that Joshua commanded, the priests, who first entered the Jordan, came last out of it. "And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests feet were lift up unto

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the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before." That this miracle might be yet more evident to their posterity, "twelve stones," taken "out of Jordan," were pitched in Gilgal; and Joshua said, "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land." The mere remembrance of any event, however important, is but one remove from forgetfulness. But Joshua's design reached much farther; by keeping alive the memory of this event, he meant the design also should be kept in view. The design was this, "That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty;" and that Israel "might fear the Lord their God for ever." May the record and remembrance of past events, be thus improved by us! Just let me add, that Gilgal, where these silent, but lasting witnesses of God's goodness were erected, is about two miles from Jericho, where the camp of Joshua was not only pitched, but continued for a considerable time.

THE Canaanites were exceedingly alarmed when they found that Israel had safely crossed the Jordan, and were astonished when they heard in what manner they had passed that formidable current
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of water in so critical a season. "Their heart melted," (says the text) "neither was there spirit in them any more because of the children of Israel." The Israelites, however, were not permitted to avail themselves of the panic and consternation of their enemies, but were ordered to be "circumcised." Circumcision, in itself, was at all times a painful and disagreeable ordinance ; but, at this time, it seemed as dangerous as it was disagreeable. Joshua knew that by attending to it, for some days, they would be equally unfit to travel, or to oppose their enemies ; he knew, it was probable the inhabitants of Jericho might hear of what was done, and that it was possible they might meditate revenge ; he knew, that what was commanded was contrary to human prudence, and might, by some, be censured as a capital mistake : but, at the same time, he knew, that God had commanded the people to be circumcised ; he knew that duty and safety were united ; and that his predecessor was in danger of being destroyed for conferring with flesh and blood concerning this very ordinance : this silenced every objection ; he heard, obeyed, and left the event with God.

THE wisdom of God in commanding their attention to this painful ordinance at Gilgal, is not less evident than his preservation of his people from

from any injury, or insult from the men of Jericho. It was not meet that any uncircumcised person, should enter on the promised rest ; by it therefore, "the Lord rolled reproach away from Israel ;" and hence the place was called, "Gilgal." Besides, God was not willing that the conquerors of Canaan should have whereof to glory, except in himself ; nor are we now, in any victory we obtain, allowed to glory in any other object,

1 Cor. i. ult.

LETTER XVIII.

NO less than three days were employed in circumcising the people; the day following, the fourteenth of Nisan, they kept the passover. And now, to a day, it was just forty years since their grand deliverance from Egypt. From these transactions, you must be more and more convinced, that Israel was redeemed to serve God. When they were delivered from Egypt, they were dedicated to God, by circumcision and the passover, and devoted to his service; and now Canaan is delivered into their hands, the same rites are renewed, and with the same design. It was not lawful for any person, on any pretence whatever, to partake of the passover while he was uncircumcised; and unless the passover was kept in faith, neither deliverance, preservation, nor conquest, was to be expected. “When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,” we are informed, that “Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion:” And when they entered

Canaan, that God exercised dominion over them, and that his sanctuary was still among them, is equally manifest.

SOON as they had attended to the passover, "they did eat of the old corn of the land, and unleavened cakes, and parched corn. And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land, neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

WHILE Joshua was thus employed before Jericho, "he lift up his eyes and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand." Joshua, alarmed at this unexpected appearance, and jealous for the safety of Israel, and the honour of Jehovah, went unto him, and, with an undaunted tone, said, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Joshua's conduct, on this occasion, was equal to his courage. He who feared an enemy of Israel in no form, revered their friend; and finding the person before him to be "the Captain of their Salvation," his attitude and expression were immediately in character. "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said

unto

unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy: and Joshua did so." When this illustrious Captain informed him of the present situation of Jericho, the manner in which he would have it attacked, and declared he had given it, with "the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour, into his hand;" this was saying every thing, in a few words: for, if the city was given into their hands by him who is "Lord of all," it was of no moment how strong or high the walls were, or how great the strength of its gates and bars, or of those who defended them; all must give way before his word, which is "powerful and full of majesty;" at which the wilderness shakes, the sea roars, and Sinai trembled. By these few words, "boasting was excluded" from Joshua, as well as from the people under his care: and it appeared that the conquest was evidently, and only, the Lord's. The orders which Joshua received concerning Jericho, were literally and punctually fulfilled; but, had not such orders been express, and from the Lord himself, to surround the city as Joshua and Israel did, it would have been as ridiculous, as now their obedience appears reasonable, and religious. Learn to distinguish what makes some actions becoming in some men only, and other actions becoming to all men; then, you will follow the best examples with caution,

tion, you will regard positive precepts conscientiously, and those of a moral nature circumspectly.

FOR seven generations had the land of Canaan now been to Israel “the land of promise,” and for “seven days” the city of Jericho was “compassed about” in the extraordinary manner you read of in the sixth of Joshua. But, on “the seventh day” only, they “compassed the city seven times.” If this event, I mean the destruction of Jericho, was a figure of the strong holds of sin and satan being subdued among the heathens, by the gospel of Jesus Christ ; perhaps, this seventh day’s service was intended to intimate, that, though the time would come when Pagan nations should hear and tremble every day, yet, the greatest alarm should be given to the kingdom of darkness one day in seven ; which, at last, like the walls of Jericho, should fall down before the mighty power of God. “And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city. So all the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets : and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man strait before him, and they took the city.”

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THE spoil of this town was dedicated to the Lord, as the first fruits of Canaan ; and Rahab was received among the Israelites, as the first fruits of the heathen. She afterwards married Salmon, a prince of Judah, and so became the mother of Boaz ; who was the husband of Ruth, and great grand-father of David. It was Rahab and her family, I apprehend, that Joshua adjured, saying, “ Cursed be the man before the Lord that raiseth up, and buildeth this city of Jericho : he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.” This prediction, it is said, was fulfilled in Hiel the Bethelite ; who rebuilt this city in the times of Ahab, 5, or 600 years after this prediction was made. Afterwards it became a very famous city. In Elisha’s time, the “ school of the prophets” was kept there ; it was also the seat of royalty. Josephus says, that Herod died there ; and he speaks of an Amphitheatre and Hippodrome in Jericho, where the Jewish nobility learned to ride the great horse, and other acts of Chivalry. The Jewish Sanhedrim, we are told, sometimes sat at this place, and tis said that no less than 12,000 stationary priests dwelt there. It is certain, our Lord honoured it with his presence, just before the conversion of Zaccheus, Luke xix. 1. —At present, however, it is only a poor dirty vil-

village of the Arabs.—Such have been the most striking revolutions of Jericho; which is about seven miles from the Jordan, and about nineteen from Jerusalem.—Between the revolution of places and persons, there is often an affecting analogy.

THE conquest of Jericho procured Joshua great fame; for the people evidently saw “the Lord was with him.” If he was under any temptation to be unduly elated with this victory, or if he imagined he should in his future progress, converse only with conquest and fame, the afflicting event which immediately followed this signal victory, and which, indeed, was occasioned by it, that event, doubtless, convinced him of his mistake, and corrected his judgment. “The children of Israel,” says the text, “committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achæn the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” Transgression, formally considered, is infinitely various, but, essentially considered, it is always the same. The nature of sin, whether in idea, if it be a true idea, or in fact, admits of no variation. Whether I do something which God forbids me, or refuse to do what he commands me, in each view, I am disobedient; and, consequently, have

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committed iniquity. What is here called “the accursed thing,” is, the spoil of Jericho; and that which made it so, was, the Divine prohibition: for they were forbidden to touch it.

BUT why “should the anger of the Lord be kindled against Israel?” Are they, as a people, to be responsible for the crimes of an individual? Are they to suffer because Achan has sinned? This seems to be the principal difficulty in the present transaction. And yet, you cannot but know, this is a difficulty that frequently occurs in the sacred page. When “David numbered the people,” Israel was punished with “pestilence.” And our Lord once expressed himself in this remarkable manner to the Jewish nation: “Verily I say unto you, upon you shall come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” Nor will this appear strange, or unjust, to the attentive reader, for in all corporate bodies of people, whether the end of their being incorporated be the safety, or the temporal advantage of the society, in many cases, the imprudence and iniquity of one member, unavoidably affects the society at large; and yet, all things considered, such political societies are deemed advantageous, and are voluntarily entered into by the wisest of men, in every

every age, and in every nation. Something like this, may be observed in family connections. Who can enter into such connections without being affected, necessarily affected, with both the good and evil of that family of which he is a part ; and the more intimate and important his connection with the family is, the more sensibly and deeply will he not be affected ? But shall we, on that account, be connected with no family ? Had all been of that mind, either we had never existed, or, we had been brought into existence in a state of disgrace ; and thus to argue, would be to increase our infamy, not to lessen it. We may farther observe, that, every disadvantage arising from the most lawful and honourable connections of one with another, originates from guilt ; which, as to its nature, we have before observed, is always the same ; and from which none are free ; but, on the contrary, all are so " guilty before God," whether they know it or not, that all they suffer in this world, is far " less than their iniquity deserveth."

ADD to this, that when we suffer for the offences of any one connected with us in a natural, civil, or religious view, (and in all these views, you will remember, Achan was connected with Israel), it certainly becomes us to enquire, whether we have not been willing to avail ourselves of

some temporal advantage connected with his crime, or to applaud his conduct, or to follow his example: or whether we have not rewarded him for doing that, which “the fear of man” only restrained us from doing ourselves? If, on enquiry, we are acquitted, we are yet to consider, that, if we were sure the punishment of any person’s sin with whom we are connected, could no way affect us, whether we ought to consider this indulgence as likely to terminate in our advantage. The contrary, I think, is evident; for, it cannot be doubted, if it be known before hand, that our evil conduct will affect those whom we esteem, as well as ourselves, that this must be a stronger motive to abstain from all that is evil, and to do that which is right, than if we knew that whatever is found to be criminal in us would no way affect any other person. He that breaks a “threefold cord,” would easily and repeatedly snap a single cord asunder. God is wise and kind, therefore, to multiply our restraints from sin; and if, after all, we are resolved to “break his bands, and cast away his cords from us,” he is wise and kind also, to chastise us in such a manner as may be most effectual to guard others against such presumption, and thereby manifest the peculiar glory of his own character.—But it is said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear

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the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son ; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."—True : but it is no where said in the word of God, nor is it fit it should, that if a son approves of the iniquity of his father, receives, contentedly, temporal advantages from it, and attempts to extenuate his father's guilt, that he is innocent, or that, without repentance, he shall go unpunished.

Mr. SAURIN, in his sermon on the patience of God, has set this matter in a striking light ; and observes, as others of note before him, " That we are sometimes to consider a nation in a moral light, as a person consisting of a body, a soul, and a duration of life. All the people who compose this nation are considered as one body : the maxims which direct its conduct in peace or in war, in commerce or religion, constitute what is called the spirit or soul of this body. The ages of its continuance are considered as the duration of its life." And, in a masterly manner, he shews, that the moral advantages of such an economy as the Jews were under, greatly preponderated against all the disadvantages that attended it. But, the truth is, in common, we want to enjoy good with-

out evil, as the word evil respects affliction, and to pursue what is evil, morally considered, without a due regard for the Chief Good.—An attention to this difficulty in the case of Achan, has interrupted the narrative before us for a few minutes, to which, I hope, you will now attend with some advantage.

LETTER XIX.

JERICHO being taken, and destroyed, and the spoil of this city devoted to the Lord; Joshua next informed himself of the strength of Ai; which was a small city near Bethaven. He thought two or three thousand men sufficient to take it; but in this he was mistaken; for “the men of Ai smote of them about thirty-six men, and chased them from before the gate, even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down.” As the method of attacking this city was very different from their approaching Jericho, so was their success. At Jericho they conquered and triumphed; here they fled and fell. And now, they seemed more like Canaanites than Israelites, for “the hearts of the people melted and became as water.” And where is the wonder? The cause, in both, was the same. Sin made them weak and multiplied their fears. But in Israel it was sought out, confessed, and abhorred; by the Canaanites, it was either concealed, or else, the subject of their triumph. What

was the issue of conduct so essentially different ? Just what might have been expected ; the Israelites obtained pardon and deliverance ; the Canaanites, “ indignation and wrath.”

ON this occasion, we behold in Joshua, great affection for Israel, and a laudable concern for the honour of the divine Name. This, however, was mixed with some unworthy suspicions of him, whom he wished to honour, and was attended with a degree of impatience highly unbecoming the character of Joshua. He said, “ Alas ! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us ? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan.” These were strange words from this great man. He added, “ O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies ? ” He might have concluded, they had turned their back on God. And of this, he was immediately informed. The Lord said unto him, “ Israel hath sinned.” — Is it not affecting, that, after such repeated, and signal proofs of the wisdom and grace of God, that still, in almost every returning trial, we should be more liable to suspect something to be wrong in his conduct, than to conceive, or confess what is wrong in ours ?

JOSHUA being informed that Israel “ could not stand

stand before their enemies" while "the accursed thing" remained among them, made diligent search to discover it, according to the direction that was given him. The consequence was, "Achan was taken," and punished ; in a manner, and at a time, the most likely to convince the whole camp, that, if they were not willing to improve their deliverance by serving God, he was determined they should not be delivered to serve sin.—In the crime of Achan we see, that they who are zealous to execute one part of the divine will, may be as eager, in another view, to violate it. Not to pity others is much easier to many than not to covet what is theirs. In profane history, nothing is more common, than to see those who have been the greatest conquerors over others, shamefully, and repeatedly overcome, by some sordid passion of their own. It might well pass for a miracle there, if, in any engagement that is mentioned, the historian could say, there was but one Achan in the camp. What then shall we think of the purity of that heavenly Monarch, who will not let one such delinquent escape without the most exemplary punishment ! It is true, his chastising hand is not always conspicuous, but we know respite is not pardon ; we know, that as no iniquity is concealed from him, so not any is seen by him with approbation ; and we are equally sure, that when, to our apprehension "clouds and darkness are round about him,

righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

THE wrath of God being removed from Israel, we are informed, that Ai was given into their hands, and consumed by fire; when, no less than twelve thousand of its wicked inhabitants, while they were dreaming of conquest, suddenly felt the vengeance of God. The spoil of this city was given to Israel, who thereby took possession of the land of promise on the west side the Jordan. After this victory, "Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal, and he wrote there upon the stones, a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.—And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." Nothing could be more seasonable, or becoming, than this solemn transaction: by the spoil of Ai, God had given them possession of the whole land; by the destruction of Achan and his family, he had recently convinced them, that, they need not expect he would ever manifest his favour at the expence either of his justice, or his wisdom;

wisdom ; and, that in the war before them, faith in his word, and obedience to his laws, were essentially necessary to every conquest ; that without these, neither their elders, officers, or judges, nay, not the ark itself, should keep them from contempt ; but, on the other hand, while they continued, and as they abounded, to such, whether Israelites, or “ strangers conversant among them,” success was certain and salvation sure.

SUCH a public and solemn engagement must have been very affecting ; but if you suppose that the repulse they met with when they first approached Ai, was the cause of this engagement, you are, I think, mistaken ; for, at first, that had a very different effect, and, had not the grace of God been displayed in their favour, it would never have produced such a meeting as this. I know indeed, it is very commonly said, ‘ That God brings good out of evil ;’ but the fact is, as there is no good in moral evil, but every thing that is contrary to it, so good, in a moral sense, is never extracted out of it. Are we debtors to corruption ? Never. All the good that is brought to us, or laid up for us, originates from God, the only fountain of Goodness, and source of all our happiness. He brings moral good to us evil creatures, by making us sensible of our evil, by pardoning our transgressions, by subduing our cor-

ruptions, and by “humbling us under his mighty hand, that he may exalt us, (and himself in us,) in due time.” If this be what is meant by the maxim I have mentioned, it is true; but all this, more than any thing else, shews us the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and that the cause of moral good is only, and entirely, the grace of God.

THE inhabitants of Canaan, were differently affected when they heard of the conquest of Ai. “The kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea, over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Periz-zite, the Hivite and Jebusite, gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua, and with Israel, with one accord.” But, “when the inhabitants of Gibeon, (which city was afterwards in the tribe of Benjamin,) heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, they did work wily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up, and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them, and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now, therefore, make ye a league with.

with us."—Actions widely different, externally considered, frequently originate from the same principle. Fear and self-preservation, influenced both the confederate kings, and the Gibeonites, to act as they did ; but had they attentively considered the just cause of their having any thing to fear from Israel, common sense would have told them, that, their only hope of safety was, their "repentance towards God," and faith in the word of his salvation. The mercy that Rahab had so lately obtained, was, in itself, a just ground of encouragement to expect, that whoever sought to obtain mercy, believing and submitting as she did, should not be disappointed. But, alas ! instead of viewing Israel, as the ministers of divine vengeance to the guilty and impenitent, they considered them as acting from personal resentment, and from a thirst for dominion and plunder ; and, being conscious, perhaps, that they themselves could plead no better title to the land they had so long possessed, they were the more easily confirmed in this opinion.

THE Gibeonites, we are assured, succeeded in their stratagem to the preservation of their lives ; but the confederate kings were destroyed. In this stratagem, with all the falsehood attending it, there was a confession of the superiority of Israel, and, that submission to them was their only hope

of safety. Joshua's regard to his oath which he made to the Gibeonites, (though it must be owned, it was rashly taken, and, temporally considered, to his hurt) does him great honour. And if he thus strictly regarded a league with strangers who had imposed upon him, he would, no doubt, have willingly entered into engagements of a still more honourable nature, ~~with any~~ of the inhabitants of Canaan, had they been "reconciled to God," and manifested it by their repentance and reformation; for every prohibition to make "no agreement with them," is to be understood, I presume, with this limitation; that they were forbid to do this, only while they continued enemies to the government and grace of God, without repentance.

WHEN Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, had heard what was done to Ai and Jericho, and the part which the men of Gibeon had acted, he and his people "feared greatly; because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai; and all the men thereof were mighty. Wherefore Adonizedek king of Jerusalem, sent to Hotham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, come up unto me and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace.

peace with Joshua, and with the children of Israel." It had been more easy, safe, and honourable for each of them, to have made peace with Israel also themselves, than to have opposed Gibeon : but, loving "darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," they could not think so. Gibeon was, therefore, deemed inimical to their country, and its ruin determined. Joshua heard of it, flew to their assistance, and prevented the destruction of their city. He did more ; he "flew them with great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makedah. And it came to pass as they fled before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died : they were more which died with the hailstones, than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

WHEN a people are ripe for ruin, delayed judgements come with double force. The sword below, and stones from above, were now the ministers of awful vengeance. What a folly would it have been to have quarrelled with either ! The enemies of God, might as safely have combined against the stones, when they saw them falling, as

against the sword of the Lord, in the hands of Joshua and Israel. On the other hand, could we suppose, that the stones which fell with vengeance on their heads, were animated matter, and conscious of the execution that was done by them, would they, on that account, have had any reason to think that such a destination argued superior excellence in them? To assert it, is to make an executioner of public justice fond of his office, and Satan himself, more haughty than he is. Yet, so vain and ignorant were many afterward in Israel, that, forgetting who strengthened their arm in battle, and to what end, that which humbled others, made them insolent and ungrateful. "To pull down," as well as to "build up," is, in many cases, absolutely necessary; but these different services are seldom equally important; never, that I know of, are they equally honourable. Jehu threw down Baal's altars, but he erected none for God. Rash reformers, in every age, generally act the same part. Their zeal is furious, and their devotion false. They abound in making alterations, both in church and state, which on the whole, are the worse for both. I mention this, that you may not be carried away with enchanting sounds, and to inform you that the same word, from different mouths, may be considered as connected with a curse, and a blessing. This has often been exemplified in the word

REFORMATION. Put it in the mouth of Moses and Joshua, and it is connected with all that is pleasing; but, from the mouths of "Korah and his company," the contrary idea is as strongly expressed, and as inseparably connected. It would be easy to multiply instances of each from Moses to Christ, and from the latter period to the present time. But I forbear.

JOSHUA being desirous, with a degree of ardour as uncommon, as it was unexpected, to pursue the advantage he had obtained over his enemies to the utmost, and knowing that the going down of the sun would prevent it, said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, untill the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." — To see kings of armies fleeing, and the host of Heaven, the highest objects of heathen adoration, standing still, at the command of Joshua; to behold them, not only affording their worshippers no assistance, but giving Israel a miraculous opportunity of obtaining an unparalleled conquest over them, was an amazing event! And, it appears to me, that, what Joshua had principally in view in this request was, the signal glory of that God whose battles he fought; being desirous, by this sign, to proclaim to all nations, that he who crowned

his

his arms with success, was “God of heaven and earth;” and that, “besides him, there was no other.”

THE five confederate kings, whom so many palaces, before their defeat, could hardly contain, now thought themselves happy to croud together into one cave. But royalty, even in disgrace, cannot be long concealed. The report of their miserable retreat soon reached the ears of Joshua ; who commanded, first, that the conquerors should “set their feet on their necks,” and then, that the captive kings should be exposed on gibbets, “until the evening.” Their cities next, without exception, were destroyed. “So Joshua,” says the text, “smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings : he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea, even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon. And all these kings, and their land, did Joshua take at one time : because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal.”

MY pen is now as weary of the subject of slaughter, as Joshua’s arm was in obtaining the conquest. You must give it leave to rest. I shall, therefore,

therefore, conclude this letter with one request, and one observation. My request is, that you will remember that Joshua in destroying the Amorites, did "as the Lord God of Israel commanded;" and, that it would have been impossible for him to have obtained such a victory, had not, "the Lord God of Israel" as he expresses it, "fought for Israel." I beg leave therefore to observe, it was *that*, which ennobled his actions, and *this*, that made him "more than a conqueror."

LETTER XX.

JO SHUA by one expedition, as we have seen, conquered all the south part of Canaan, “from Kadesh-barnea, even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.” “The country of Goshen,” mentioned here, lay within Canaan, in the south part of the tribe of Judah; and, like Goshen in the land of Egypt, it is said to have been very fruitful. Notwithstanding this rapid and astonishing conquest, which, one should have thought, would have made the remaining powers willing to have fought for mercy, we are told, that when the kings of the north part of Canaan heard of it, they made the same fatal misimprovement of this report, as the southern kings had made of the conquest of Jericho, and Ai. Royalty is reluctant to stoop. The city which had no king, submitted and was saved. Those cities which had kings, contended for their usurped dominions, and perished.

IN this northern combination against Israel, “Jabin, king of Hazor,” was chief. “He sent to Jobab, king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron,

ron, and to the king of Achshaph, and to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains, south of Cinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor, on the west; and to the Canaanite on the east, and on the west; and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mispeh. And they went out, they and all their hosts with them; much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots, very many. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel."

WERE you not in possession of what is sufficient to teach you the Geography of the Old Testament, I should be more particular respecting the situation of each of these places, and of others, mentioned in these letters, than I now am; but, as you are, I take the less notice of them, and indulge myself with such remarks as in their own nature appear, to me, more important, and which I apprehend, for you, are more useful. It may be proper, however, to observe, that by the waters of Merom, the Samachonite lake appears to be intended; which, you know,

know, is a small lake between the head of the Jordan, and the lake of Gennesaret : nor need I tell you, that this lake is called in the Old Testament, Cinneroth, and, in the New Testament, the Sea of Galilee.

THIS northern association against Israel, was no more successful than the southern. Joshua being encouraged, by the promise and presence of God, to regard with the utmost exactness all his precepts, and doing so, was again victorious. He “ took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same : even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon, under mount Hermon : and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.”

VICTORIOUS as the arms of Joshua were, his progress was not so rapid in the present, as in the former expedition. For, it is said, he “ made war a long time with all those kings.” And from his taking of Jericho to the close of his wars with the Canaanites, it appears, he was no less than seven years employed in this dreadful work ; which, some have supposed, was presaged by his “ compassing that city about seven days” before he destroyed

destroyed it. Be that as it may, it is certain, the goodness and wisdom of God, were as conspicuous when the success of the war was protracted, as when it was rapid even to astonishment. By these delays their faith and obedience were tried, and true devotion singularly exercised; the wickedness of the Canaanites was also abundantly manifested; and, as they were unwilling to make any league with Israel, they were left "without excuse." Besides, in this delay, not only the faithfulness of God to Israel, but his compassion also, was affectingly evident; for, God had said, "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little, I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased and inherit the land."

IT is awfully grievous to observe, that notwithstanding judgement was so long delayed, "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all other they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses."—Observe, God destroys none utterly, but those who oppose the design

sign of his government and grace without repentance ; the Canaanites did both for a series of years ; yes, from “ generation to generation ” they hated to be reformed, and stumbled where a common enemy would have stood. And now, God not only left them to the influence of that corruption which they loved to indulge, but, by the holy mysteries of his unerring providence, he multiplied the occasions, not the cause, of their stumbling, and thus, judicially hardened their hearts. What a dreadful situation are such people in ! to whom every caution is an offence, by whom every warning is despised, and to whom every entreaty is vain ! Deplorable state ! for that which melts others into tenderness and submission, fires them with rage, and fills them with resentment. Unhappy men ! all but themselves see their guilt, and lament it ; behold their approaching ruin, and shudder at the thought ; while they, shocking idea ! rush forward to destruction, with as much unconcern “ as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or, as a fool to the correction of the stocks ! ”

IN this northern expedition, of which I have taken so much notice, Joshua “ cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, and from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of

Israel. ”

Israel : Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel : only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod," (three cities inhabited by the Philistines,) "there remained." After the account we have of these events, in the book of Joshua, the illustrious conqueror gives us a particular catalogue of all his conquests, and those of his predecessor. This catalogue is so clear, as to need no comment, and so circumstantial, as to need no addition. Consult it yourself, as you may have occasion, and excuse my transcribing it, as that labour seems needless. From the number of the kings mentioned in this catalogue, which is no less than 31, one may observe, that a thirst for dominion and a shadow of royalty, prevailed in the earliest ages of antiquity ; and, that this universal passion was always more or less predominant, as dominion and royalty in a moral view, were either approved or disesteemed. They who are most destitute of the substance of royalty, are often most eager to embrace the shadow ; and they, who of all men have the least command over themselves, are usually the most anxious to obtain, and establish an injurious authority over others. I am not able to say, which, in a national view, is most ruinous, to be without a king, or, to have many. The madness of a multitude without

without a Monarch, and the mischief of multiplying rulers without reason, are, I think, to be equally deprecated. Great Britain, to her cost, has had the experience of both ; but, while the dreadful evils attending each are remembered, we may reasonably hope, she will not again be the dupe of either. When “every man does what is right in his own eyes,” or what is wrong, because a tyrant imagines it to be right ; the nation that is either the seat of such anarchy, as the first idea conveys, or the subject of such infatuation, as appears in the second, is, in herself, contemptible, and, in the eyes of the best judges, on the verge of ruin.

LETTER XXI.

WE are now arrived at that happy period in our history "when the land rested from war." Let us observe, how this pleasing interval was improved.

"Now Joshua," it is said, "was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. This is the land that yet remaineth; all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri, from Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdithites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites. From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites: and the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon toward the sun rising, from Baal-Gad under Mount Hermon, unto the entering into Hamath. All the inhabitants of the hill

country

country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee."

Not only the land which they had conquered, but that part of it which they had not yet conquered, even all that was promised, they were to divide by lot. And Joshua did so. Just as David, afterward, counted all to be his which God had promised to give him. "God," saith he, "hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head, Judah is my lawgiver, Moab is my wash-pot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe: over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not thou, O God, who hadst cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man." So spake David, and sang in faith of promised victory; which, when obtained, almost in the same expressions, he sang the faithfulness of God. Each of these hymns is still extant; the first is now called the 60th psalm, and the last, the 108th. But the subject before us, namely, the

manner in which the whole land was divided, deserves particular notice.

THE Israelites, you know, were the descendants of Jacob, who obtained the honourable and lasting name of Israel, by wrestling successfully with God in prayer. His twelve sons were the fathers of multitudes, and heads of the tribes of that people. The names of these patriarchs, according to their birth, were "Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin." Of these, "Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun," were born to Israel by his wife "Leah," "Joseph and Benjamin," by his wife "Rachel:" "Dan and Naphtali, by Bilhah, Rachel's maid; and Gad and Asher, by Zilpah, Leah's maid." And it is remarkable, that this is the order observed by Moses, in naming the Patriarchs that went down with Jacob into Egypt.

OUT of these twelve tribes, it pleased God to chuse the tribe of "Levi to minister to him in holy things, and to wait at his Altar." He therefore ordained that they should be maintained by all the other tribes, that they should be partakers of those things which belonged to the Temple and the Altar, and being thus freed from the corroding cares of commerce, for the good of the

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whole, they were entirely, and continually dedicated to the Divine service.

To fill up the vacancy “of the tribe of Levi,” and to accomplish the predictions concerning “Joseph,” his two sons, “Ephraim and Manasseh,” were made the heads of two tribes in Israel: thus the original number was complete; “Ephraim and Manasseh” filling up the place of “Levi and Joseph.”

THE manner in which lots were cast for dividing the land, is not material for us to know; but concerning the nature of a lot, I would not have you ignorant. Where lots are cast, there is a solemn appeal to God in a matter of great moment, in order to know his will concerning that, which could not in any other way be known; and when “the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord.” The design of the land’s being divided by lot, was, to prevent disputes among those who were brethren, to give each an opportunity of glorifying God in his own lot, and to intimate, that God knows best how to dispose of his own people in this world, as well as in the next. As there is no lot, in providence, without, what some have called, its crook, so, there is none so crooked, but, by the grace of God, it may be daily improved to the divine praise.

THE geographical order, or situation, of the “twelve

“twelve tribes,” as they were settled in the land of Canaan by lot, is, from south to north; and, in this arrangement, the tribes were thus situated: “Judah, Simeon, Dan, Benjamin, Ephraim, half of Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali,” on the west of Jordan; and to the east of that river, “Gad and Reuben,” and the other “half tribe of Manasseh.” As the tribes were situated on each side the Jordan, so the tribe of “Naphtali and Zebulun,” with the northern part of “Issachar,” on the west of Jordan, were opposite to the half tribe of “Manasseh” on the east side. And the lower, or southern part of “Issachar,” with the other half tribe of “Manasseh,” on the west, were opposite to the tribe of “Gad,” in the east. And opposite to the children of “Joseph and Benjamin,” and the north part of the tribe of “Judah,” was the tribe of “Reuben.”—The boundaries pertaining to each tribe, are mentioned with sufficient precision in the latter part of the book of Joshua; and as the particulars there mentioned, are as obvious as the account is exact, a recital is not necessary. The order in which the lots came up, and some remarks respecting each tribe, or most of them, seem to be more material.

THE tribe of Judah was settled first; which had the most extensive possessions of any. Of this tribe was Caleb; who came to Joshua,

and reminded him of the promise long since made to him by Moses, and requested it might be fulfilled. Lest Joshua should say, ‘ Were I, Caleb, to grant thy petition, thou art not able to take possession of Kirjath-arba ; ’ — Caleb observed, ‘ That, as the land on which his feet had trodden, was promised him for an inheritance, God had preserved him alive to that day, that he might inherit it : ’ “ as yet,” continued he, “ I am as strong this day, as I was in the day that Moses sent me to search the land ; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in. Now therefore, give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day ; for thou heardest, in that day, how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced : if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.” Joshua, doubtless, on this occasion, beheld the face of his old colleague, and heard his narrative with joy ; “ he blessed him,” it is said, “ and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite, unto this day ; because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.” — The connection between *faith, obedience, and consolation, is inseparable,*
wise

wise and pleasing ; and, I hope, you will always think, that, the meanest inheritance, in this world, so connected, is preferable to the greatest possession without it.

CALEB had no sooner the grant of “the city of Arba,” (which Arba, was the father of Anak) than he was determined to take possession ; and, we are informed, that he “ drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak. And he went up thence unto the inhabitants of Debir ; and the name of Debir, before, was Kirjath-sepher. And Caleb said, he that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah, my daughter, to wife.” “Othniel” availed himself of Caleb’s declaration, and succeeded. This valiant young man was, afterwards, a Judge in Israel. I have only farther to observe, at present, concerning the tribe of Judah, that, “as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out.” This, however, was afterwards effected by the aid of “Simeon,” and the city consumed ; see, the first chapter of Judges ; but “the strong hold of Zion,” which commanded the city, was in the possession of the enemy for many years ; the conquest of it, was reserved for David ; who took it, and afterwards dwelt in it, and made Jebus, on this occasion, called Jerusalem, the capital of his kingdom.

IN comparing some accounts in the book of Joshua, with what you read in the book of Judges, it will appear, as though some places were twice subdued ; and, in some instances, this was literally true ; but in other instances it was not : a complete harmony of the whole, is what some, who are every way superior to me, have attempted in vain. Dr. Lightfoot supposed, ‘ that a close commentary upon the first book of Chronicles would be of singular service in this matter, and in other things of equal importance.

AFTER Judah, the children of Joseph next obtained their lot. You remember, these were “Ephraim and Manasseh ;” and as half of the tribe of “Manasseh” was settled on the east side of the Jordan, by Moses, Joshua had only to settle the bounds of the other half of that tribe, and the tribe of “Ephraim.”

IN the portion of Ephraim, as well as of Judah, there were some of the Canaanites unsubdued : for “they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer : but the Canaanites dwelt among the Ephramites” for some time, yet subject to “tribute.” The account is much the same concerning “Manasseh,” for it is said, “the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities,” meaning the cities mentioned in the xviith of Joshua, “but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Yet, it came to pass, when the children

of

of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out." Whether it was principally owing to carelessness or cowardice, to avarice or affection, that the Canaanites were not subdued by the children of Judah and Joseph, I know not; but, it is possible, that what, at first, passed for compassion and benevolence, and was, as such, applauded, originated from one of these views; perhaps, at different periods, from them all. By the first, they indulged their sloth; and, by the second, their fear; by the tribute they received, they consulted, meanly consulted, their own interest, and by the criminal affection which they had for the Canaanites, they were first ensnared with their idolatry, and at length became tributaries to them, from whom they themselves had exacted tribute.

WE have yet attended to two lots only, on the west of Jordan; one of which, it seems, was not very acceptable to its new possessors. The complaining tribe was the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua was of this tribe; and, it appears, they expected some particular favour on that account; but Joshua, to his honour, preferred faithfulness to God in every public trust, to the baleful influence of any irregular passion, in favour of his family or friends. Thus, however, the children of Joseph

expostulated with him : “ Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto ? ” Joshua, with great good sense, retorted their own argument. “ If, ” said he, “ thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites, and of the Giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.” Many have boasted of that strength they were unwilling to exert, and have thought themselves great, when, names and numbers excepted, all the difference between them and their brethren was, those great and vain pretensions, which wisdom and modesty have always suppressed, and for which, ignorance and arrogance have as constantly contended. The children of Joseph, at that time, were too much addicted to this false idea of greatness, and therefore, instead of listening to Joshua’s proposals, they objected, “ That all the Canaanites who dwelt in the land of the valley, had chariots of iron, both they who were of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who were of the valley of Jezreel.” Joshua replied, “ Thou art a great people, and hast great power,” exert it, “ and thou shalt not have one lot only ; but the mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood ; and thou shalt cut it down, and the out-goings of it shall

shall be thine ; for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." Every day gives us an opportunity of observing, that many who cannot, or who will not improve their present lot, are, like Ephraim, the most anxious to obtain another ; but to improve what we have, is, in itself, more honourable, and, in its issue, far more advantageous. So Joshua, it appears to me, instructed his brethren ; the lesson is important in every line of life ; in each may you receive it, and retain it !

LETTER XXII.

WHEN the tribe of Judah and of Joseph, had obtained their inheritance, before the rest of the land was divided among the seven remaining tribes, we read of the Tabernacle being set up at Shiloh. The whole congregation of Israel was present at this solemnity. Shiloh, you must know, was a city in the tribe of Ephraim; it lay north of Bethel, south of Lebonah, and not far from Shechem. In this city, not only the Tabernacle, but the ark and altar of the Lord were fixed by Joshua; consequently, it became the common centre of public worship to the children of Israel; and it continued to be so from this time to the death of Eli. At length, being horribly defiled, it was, if I may so express it, first degraded, and then destroyed. Jeremiah, or rather the Lord by him, reminded the Jews of this calamity, and the cause.—“ Go ye now unto my place” saith the Lord, “ which was in Shiloh, where I set my Name at the first, and see what I did unto it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done

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all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore, I will do unto this house, [the temple at Jerusalem] which is called by my Name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh." This awful threatening has been, long since, literally fulfilled: in which, the remark of an apocryphal writer, 'That God did not choose the people for the place's sake, but the place for the people's sake,' has been abundantly verified. But I return to my narrative, and proceed.

WHEN the Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, though the land was subdued before them, "there yet remained among the children of Israel, no less than seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. And Joshua said unto them, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" The words, possession and promise, in sound, are always pleasing; but sometimes the blessings they contain, and the way in which those blessings are to be enjoyed, are, to many, disagreeable. Our views of salvation are miserably contracted, and our aversion to make those conquests, which God has ordained to precede our enjoyment of the promised inheritance, is astonishingly great.

To rouse the lethargic tribes from their present stupor, Joshua ordered "three men" to be sent from "each tribe to go through the land" that was yet undivided, and, on their return, to describe it to him, that he might divide it among them. They obeyed and went. On their return, "Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh, before the Lord: and then Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions."

"THE lot of the tribe of Benjamin came up first, according to their families," the bounds of which are mentioned, in the eighteenth of Joshua. "The second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon, according to their families. The third lot came up for the children of Zebulun, according to their families. The fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar, according to their families. The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher, according to their families. The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali: even for the children of Naphtali, according to their families. And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan, according to their families." In this order were the seven tribes settled; the particular boundaries of each tribe are mentioned in the nineteenth of Joshua.

IN this division of Canaan by lot, it is observable,

able, that, though the quantity and quality of the land given to each tribe, were by no means equal, yet it was divided according to the respective families of each tribe, so that what was long since said of the manna may be applied to the division of the land ; “ they that had much, had nothing over, and they who had little, had no lack.” Each had according to his wants, and that which, upon the whole, was best. Such a lot, or portion of this world, the wise son of Jakeh, prayed for, when he said, “ Give me neither poverty nor riches : feed me with food convenient for me !” But doubtless, it becomes a christian to say, ‘ Give me either poverty or riches, or the mean between them ; and enable me, O Lord, to add, “ I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content !”

WE may farther observe, that on the division of the land, some towns and cities belonging to one tribe, were situated on the boundaries of another tribe, and that by this arrangement of property, a friendly connection was kept up between some, and established among others, who, if no such appointment had taken place, must have been at such a distance from each other, as probably would have operated to the disadvantage of the whole. Civil and religious connections, are the strength

strength and safety, the beauty and glory of society ; and to promote the latter, which well consists with the former, it was ordained, that one place should be the common centre of established worship, and that all the tribes should meet there at certain appointed seasons. This was a divine establishment, and peculiar to that period when the kingdom of God, in this world, was wholly confined to the land of Judea.

“ WHEN they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel” it is said, “ gave an inheritance to Joshua, the son of Nun, among them.” This great man neither fought for property nor for fame. His integrity and prudence concerning his own tribe, we mentioned before ; his patience and moderation appear in his acceptance of the present gift. A gift which he was far from despising, because, though the gift itself was small, “ the city that he asked was given according to the word of the Lord.” The city referred to was, “ Timnath-heres,” the same with Timnah-serah in mount Ephraim, which Joshua built, and made it convenient for himself and family, and then “ dwelt in it to the day of his death.” What seems to have endeared this city to Joshua was, that it lay in his own tribe, and near to Shiloh ;

Ioh ; there, you remember, was the Tabernacle, the ark, and altar of God, and, on that account, there was the heart of Joshua.

I HAVE before observed, that the tribe of Levi, being ordained “to minister unto the Lord in holy things,” and to officiate for the people, was to be maintained by the other tribes ; not however, according to their humour, or generosity, or the different demands of the Priests and Levites on the people, but according to divine appointment. The sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire, were theirs by inheritance ; that is, certain parts of the sacrifice, and other dues, were as much theirs by inheritance, as the land divided by lot was the inheritance of the other tribes. And tho’ Moses, and Joshua, “gave them no inheritance in land,” yet, as they had families, and were numerous ; as their work was sacred, and required retirement, they could not be without proper habitations, which were also appointed by lot. The cities appointed for the Levites to dwell in, and hence called Levitical Cities, were, in number 48. These cities were divided between the children of the three sons of Levi ; “Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.” Aaron, the High Priest, descended from Kohath, and his children, had by lot 23 cities ; thirteen of these cities lay in the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin, and ten, in the tribes of Ephraim and Dan, and in the

half

half tribe of Manasseh, west of Jordan. The children of Gershom had 13 cities, which lay in the tribes of Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali, and in the half tribe of Manasseh, in Bashan, on the east of Jordan. The children of Merari had 12 cities, in the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun. The names of these cities are mentioned in the twenty-first of Numbers: and with each city, you will find, the "suburbs" also were granted to the Levites. The first 13 cities, that were given to the sons of Aaron the priest were called Sacerdotal cities; for the sons of Aaron were chosen to the priesthood. Every Priest was a Levite, but every Levite was not a priest; that order pertained only to the house of Aaron.

It deserves our notice, that, the 13 Sacerdotal cities, were all of them in the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin; so that when the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, under the unhappy reign of Rehoboam, by the art and influence of Jeroboam, they were still situated in that part of the holy land, which was stedfast to David, and were still in possession of Jerusalem; where it was their duty to attend in their several courses. Had they dwelt in such cities as revolted, the kings of Israel would, doubtless, have interfered, and prevented their going up to the holy city. In such a case, many difficulties would

have been unavoidable, which, by the wisdom and grace of God, were happily prevented.

THERE yet remains one appointment, which took place at this time, too important to be overlooked. I mean that, concerning the cities of refuge. The number of these cities was six; the appointment itself, was wise and gracious, and the situation of the cities to answer the end designed, was proper and convenient. By divine direction, "they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the mount of Judah. And, on the other side Jordan, by Jericho, eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain, out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, out of the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourned among them, that whosoever killed any person unawares, might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation." The refuge which these cities afforded to the delinquent, was very far from interfering with the rights of public justice, or the dictates of sound wisdom. If any person who fled to one of those cities of refuge, endeavoured to impose on the Elders, by pleading

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he was guilty of slaughter only, when, in fact, he was guilty of murder, the avenger of blood, who pursued him, could insist on a fair hearing; and, on conviction of his guilt before the Elders of the city, he had a right to demand the fugitive; nor were they, on legal conviction, reluctant to give him up. But if, on the other hand, when the accuser and accused came face to face, it appeared, that he who had fled for refuge was within the description of those persons for whom such cities were appointed, he was not only protected, but maintained by the city to which he fled, and, at the death of the High Priest, obtained his full liberty. Thus, you see, the privilege of those cities were so wisely balanced with the equity of a fair trial, and with such confinement to the incautious, that they were equally calculated to comfort the afflicted and to caution the unwary. And think you, that less wisdom is connected with the refuge set before us in the gospel, than in the present instance? Impossible. 'Tis true, not only the guilty may "flee for refuge to the hope set before him;" but he who is conscious of his guilt, and sure that every other refuge will fail him, he is the very person, the only person who is exhorted and encouraged to flee to Jesus Christ for promised protection; but then, it is evident, he is only to expect such refuge from

from him, as is consistent with the glory of his character, and the design of his death, which is inseparably connected with regeneration, and reformation. Nor are we to imagine, after all, that by fleeing to Christ for refuge, he will protect us from the common and established course of justice among men, should we justly expose ourselves to its awful censure, or, that he will exempt us from any duty, personal or relative, either to God or man. The amiable conduct of our Lord to an expiring thief, may convince us, the former was never intended; and both the nature and design of that refuge which he himself is to the guilty, strongly assure us, that the latter is not to be expected.

LETTER XXIII.

WHETHER "the two tribes and an half," were dismissed when "the land had rest from war," or after it was divided by lot, is not so evident, nor is it to us, material. The manner, however, in which they were sent away by Joshua, does them and him great honour, and is worthy our notice. "He called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God. And now the Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now, return ye, and get ye unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side Jordan. But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you; to love the Lord your God,

God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul. So Joshua blessed them and sent them away: and they went unto their tents."

THE great end of their redemption, viz. to serve the Lord, you may observe, was continually kept in view by Joshua; and on the nature of that delightful service, how beautifully did he expatiate? In his opinion, it was "to love him, to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments, to cleave unto him, and to serve him," as he ought to be served, "with all their heart, and with all their soul." Former diligence in this service, however great, is no excuse to be negligent in future. God forbid it should! for every cessation and change from this service, is both wicked and miserable. When it is said, "So Joshua blessed them and sent them away," it shows us, that the end and evidence of redemption are so closely connected, that where the end is not regarded, the evidence is not enjoyed; and, that when it is, honour and happiness are its certain concomitants. Thus dismissed, they went their way to their tents with that gladness and gratitude which a consciousness of the Divine favour and his approbation of their conduct only could inspire.

THESE two tribes and an half, who had their portion

portion in the land of promise first assigned them, were the last who took possession of their inheritance; but none of the tribes entered on their inheritance with greater honour. This made their portion, when they came to enjoy it, the more pleasing. Their brethren had fought for them before they passed the Jordan, and they nobly, and readily agreed to march with them into the western parts of Canaan, and to continue with them till the land, at large, was subdued. It seemed inglorious to them to be among the bleating of their sheep, and lowing of their herds, while their brethren heard the alarm of war, and were struggling for victory with the common enemy. Bravely they bore the heat of the day, nor were impatient to return till they were dismissed with blessing and praise. Thus patiently, with benevolence to his brethren, and increasing regard to the "Captain of his salvation," does the christian endeavour to go through a series of succeeding conflicts, till he finishes his appointed course with joy, and is dismissed in peace.

THE first concern that engaged the united attention of these tribes, after their return, was the preservation of true religion, and the peculiar privileges attending it, to them, and to their posterity. Without this, to pious minds, every earthly inheritance is inconsiderable. Future ages, they were

were under apprehensions, might consider the Jordan as the utmost bounds of Canaan, and be ready to say, ‘They were a distinct people,’ or to insinuate, ‘If they were originally of Israel, they were, on some account, excluded the land of promise to their shame, and had no right to attend the services of the sanctuary.’ To prevent such censures, and those disputes which are too common among brethren, “they built an altar;” an altar so remarkable in size, and so peculiar in its form, as to be a standing witness to posterity, that, though they were separated from the other tribes of Israel by the Jordan, they were of the same common father, that they assisted in the conquest of Canaan, and were honourably dismissed by Joshua to the inheritance granted them by Moses; and that, therefore, their right, and duty to attend the sanctuary service at Shiloh, or where-ever the tabernacle in after-ages should be fixed, was indisputable. This was conduct becoming the children of their great progenitor. But the first report concerning it, like the generality of reports, was defective; and, which is equally common, misunderstood. It is pleasing to observe, that, though their conduct was misinterpreted, their brethren, at the same time, acted a noble part, according to the idea which they had conceived of this transaction. That an altar was built, was evident; many had

had seen it ; and that it was built for sacrifice, by them, was taken for granted ; for they could not conceive to what other end it could be erected. Had this been really the case, their fears were just, their deliberation wise, their message in the name of the whole congregation, kind and awful, and their remonstrance, religious. In each view, I admire their conduct, and only lament in them, what I have often lamented in myself, a disposition to judge of others attainments by my own, and of some facts, without proper evidence.

THE answer "of the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh," to this remonstrance, was highly pleasing ; and well it might, for it contained every thing that was proper to be said on that occasion ; to God, a solemn appeal, to their brethren, fraternal respect ; for religion, a just concern ; and for their posterity, the deepest regard ; yet all this, in a few words ; polished without art, and pointed without rancour. This speech, which I suppose was delivered by some venerable Elder, in the name of all the separated brethren, had the desired effect. Phinehas was pleased ; the princes, who were with him, were pleased ; all Israel was pleased, and the God of Israel praised.

THE wisest of men, even in full assembly, have been, and still are, subject to err ; but there

there is frequently something attending the errors of the wise and good, that shew they are, if I may so express it, well meant mistakes ; by which they are often distinguished from common errors : to discover this, is delightful ; to display it, is useful. How others may have observed, I know not, but the caution, the candour, and generosity, which shine through all the mist of error that surrounded Joshua, and those that were with him, appear to me, so many distinguishing circumstances in their favour. How truly noble, for instance, was that benevolence which not only shines, but blazes in their fine address ! " If," say they, " the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's Tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us." Is it possible for any thing short of exalted piety to produce such benevolence as this ? It was in effect saying, ' Rather than see our brethren idolaters,' (which, on various grounds, was what they feared they were, or would be) ' we will give them a portion with us ; yes, however this proposal may affect us, as to our property and possessions, may we but live together in love, and cleave to him who hath crowned us with success, we will willingly sacrifice every thing to enjoy that pleasure ! ' Consult the speech itself ; and while some are naturally led to dwell, unprofitably to

themselves and others, on what appears criminal in their conduct, may you, on this occasion, recollect and regard the Apostolic advice; then, "whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," you will "think on these things."

LETTER XXIV.

A TRAVELLER, who, with many a weary step, now cheared with hope, now chilled with fear, having so far advanced on his journey, as to reach some eminence, from which, his last stage appears in view, and his first is yet in sight, naturally looks round with gratitude, before he can think of leaving the pleasing spot. Such a prospect in our history, we seem, at length, to have obtained ; let us survey the variegated scene before we proceed.

YONDER is Egypt, still bleeding from her wounds, but not repenting of her guilt ; the Red Sea flowing in its usual channel, and the flower of Egypt carried, with resistless force, through the straits of Babelmandel, into the Eastern Ocean. The desart land and waste howling wilderness, through which we passed, is now replete with horror ; abandoned to beasts of prey, not only in the form of lions, and leopards, but, if I may hazard the expression, in the form of Men. But see, see how the pastures of Bashan smile, and the mountains of Gilead rejoice ! Tyranny and oppression,

luxury and lewdness, are banished from those abodes; and order, and love, its fountain head, with temperance and chastity, their constant attendants, have taken possession. The vallies and neighbouring hills, seem conscious of the change. The hill of Bashan pours a profusion of sweets around. The eye feasts on the smiling scene with joy; the conscious heart participates with pleasure, and prompts the tongue to instantaneous praise. Nor less delightful are the changing scenes on every side. Charming sight! where abominable idols were lately sat up, and works of darkness promoted and applauded, see now, cities of refuge and devotion erected! Where God's dominion and grace were despised, now see, the Tabernacle of the Lord, and the Ark of his Testimony! see, his grace received, and his government revered!—What a sight had this been to Melchisedec! But, happily for that priest of the most high God, he lived not to see the general defection of his people. He was in mercy taken away from the evil to come, which, it seems, rolled in like a flood, soon after his decease. So, after the death of Joshua, the waters of iniquity prevailed in Israel; but not without their own consent. Fatal flood! which, when let in, is always accompanied with those wrecks the wisest sinner cannot avoid, with that shame which

which the boldest cannot shun, and with that sorrow which the art of man cannot assuage.

THE death of Joshua is now before us; with that affecting event I shall close my Narrative concerning the conquest of Canaan, but not my remarks.

JOSHUA was now an hundred and ten years old. Seventeen years he ruled over Israel; the first seven of which, he fought their battles, and in the last ten years of his life, he divided the land, set up the Tabernacle at Shiloh, buried the bones of the patriarchs at Sichem, and then, by vindicating the character of God, and proclaiming his Name to the people; by engaging them, in the most solemn manner, to regard it, and by ascribing the glory of all his conquests to the Lord, he finished his course with joy. The last actions of his life, are those we are now to consider.

“ JOSHUA,” says the text, “ called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age; and ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot, these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that

I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward. And the Lord your God he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight, and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you. Be ye therefore very courageous to keep, and to do, all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand, or to the left: that ye come not among these nations, these that remain amongst you; neither make mention of the name of their Gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them; but cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day. For the Lord hath driven out from before you, great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is, that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you. Take good heed, therefore, unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else, if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know, for a certainty, that the Lord your God, will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps

traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you. And behold, this day, I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore, it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you ; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them, then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you."

I HAVE given you this speech, at its full length, because, I think it so important, and because, I imagined, the few remarks that follow, would be the better understood.

OBSERVE, I beseech you, with what gratitude and pleasure, Joshua declared, that every blessing they received was from God ; and that they must still be indebted to him for every other blessing

they either expected or desired. He assured them, that without courage they could not conquer their enemies, and that without confidence in the promises of God, and a conscientious regard to his precepts, they would never "be courageous." It was thus, he informed them, that he himself had been crowned with conquest. And, as he was convinced, that nothing could promote their happiness, or preserve their privileges, if a due attention to God's design and their duty was wanting, he pressed this upon them by all that could give it force: and knowing that nothing was more likely to obtain the great end he had in view, than to exhibit that central point, on which, all their acceptable obedience to God, must ever turn, this he set before them with all the solemnity of caution, and with all the anxiety of affection and fear. In the fulness of his heart he cried out to Israel, "Take good heed to yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." He well knew, as this abounded, all would be easy, and, as it declined, duty would be difficult, and victory impossible. To excite their love to the best of Beings, he mentioned God's distinguishing love to them, and some of the most affecting instances of it, from their first deliverance to that day; and to guard them against all that was contrary, he plainly informed them, what, in such a case, they might expect, nay, what they would certainly

tainly meet with, whether they expected it or no. Thus, at once, in the most pleasing manner, did Joshua support a diversity of consistent characters; for, in this speech to Israel, he acted as a friend and a father; and to God, as a servant and a son.

ONE should have thought, a speech so copious and pertinent, so pathetic and powerful, would have sufficed. But, I believe, they who say most for God, frequently think they have said but little; and while life continues, they wish to say more. If nothing new presents itself to their minds, they are glad to embrace every returning opportunity to say the same things again; which to them, is not grievous, and for their hearers, is always safe.

THUS did Joshua; who, finding his end not to be so near as he imagined in his last speech, (his spirits being revived, and his strength renewed,) resolved once more to attend to that great work which had so lately engaged his best attention. A work, which he had never more at heart, (and what is much more remarkable, it may be truly said, which he had hardly ever less at heart) than in his dying hour. Full of this laudable purpose, he “gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the Elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their Judges, and for their

officers, and they presented themselves before God." Awful silence and eager expectation, every where prevailed in this solemn assembly. They were not disappointed. God spake by Joshua, and they felt the force of his address. They saw him as their father, and heard him as obedient children. He first reminded them of their famous Ancestor, and of the divine Mercy to him and his posterity; and then, represented the manner in which this mercy had been displayed to Abraham, and Isaac, and afterwards to Jacob and his sons, by Moses and Aaron. Memory revived to Joshua the most affecting scenes of the divine goodness, and his tongue exhibited them, in order, to the people. They heard with joy, and listened with praise. Joshua saw it, and was thankful; but he was not yet satisfied. He knew, if God was not obeyed, he could not be truly honoured. He knew, it was their duty, their interest, and their honour to serve God, and that this was his immutable design in every display of his favour towards them, from first to last. "Now therefore," said he, "fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side the flood, and in Egypt: and serve ye the Lord." As if he had said, 'Unless you are willing cordially and constantly

stantly to serve the Lord, do not imagine I can be contented either with your profoundest attention, or your loudest applause. No, believe me, I have no interest at heart separate from his; nor do I, as a dying man, wish for any other esteem from you than what is subservient to the divine glory.'

THE duty to which Joshua so earnestly, so repeatedly exhorted them, was not only important, but self-evident; and the unavoidable alternative was so abominably absurd, that, he thought he might safely refer the matter to their own choice. "Choose you," said he, "this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell." They were astonished at the manner in which their duty was stated and enforced. The words of Joshua pierced their hearts, and their tongues, in terms becoming them, immediately expressed their just abhorrence of the most distant thought of their preferring idols to the living God. "God forbid," say they, "that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods!" It is much to be lamented, that subjects of such importance are not more frequently represented with like solemnity to the conscience of the hearer. Certainly, God is as worthy of our service, as he

was of theirs. He demands it, and deserves it. But it is evident, we shall never serve him acceptably, unless we serve him by choice; and, ought we not to be told plainly, that, if we do not thus serve the living God, it is because we choose to be the servants of sin? Can you think of this alternative without horror? or can any man prefer the latter to the former without being self-condemned? Can you wonder, that a Prophet bewailing such horrid impiety, should say, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—How different, how widely different is this, from the superficial views, and frozen language of some on the same subject!

WHEN the people, of whom we were just now speaking, said to Joshua, "We also will serve the Lord," he replied, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." This reply, at the first view, seems as strange as it was unexpected. What could Joshua mean by such words? Did he mean, at last, to discourage them from this service? Why then did he exhort them to it? Or, if he thought it was impracticable for them to serve the Lord, why did he mention his own example? He certainly knew, that if

if he and his house were resolved to serve the Lord, that resolution was formed by grace; by that grace, which was as sufficient for Israel as it was for himself and family; and, I think it my duty to add, the same grace, is as sufficient to enable us to serve God, as it was for any person in the days of Joshua, or in any other period from that to this. I apprehend, therefore, what Joshua had in view, by these words, was, to convince them, that a fixed resolution was as necessary to serve God acceptably, as deliberate choice. He meant not to damp their courage, far from it; for by reminding them of the true character of that God whom he wished them to serve, and of what, in his opinion, was essential to such service as he approved, he meant to increase it; and in this attempt, had he been unsuccessful, he was certain of securing to himself the testimony of a good conscience. It appears however, they both understood, and approved of his design, and with a laudable resolution they again said, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord."

"THE words of the wise," Solomon observes, "are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd." Such were the words of Joshua; stroke followed stroke, till, in the language of mechanics, the nail was driven home, and clinched. "Ye

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are witnesses against yourselves," said he "that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve him :" meaning by this mode of expression, I apprehend, to inform them, that they certainly would be witnesses against themselves, if, after such a voluntary and solemn engagement, they did not continue to serve the Lord. And they said, "We are witnesses." "Now therefore put away," said he, "the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute, and an ordinance in Shechem."

"AND Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God ;" in which, or at least, in faithful copies of that book, they are yet preserved ; and from a translation of one of those copies, the substance of those words is now transcribed in this letter. Joshua also "took a great stone," on which, it is probable, the greater part of that day's transactions was recorded, "and set it up there, under an oak, that was by the Sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us : it shall be there as a witness unto you, lest

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ye deny your God." This you are to understand by way of Prosopopœia, which, you know, is a figure in rhetoric; in which figure, things are personified, or spoken of in language suited to persons, which is very common in scripture; and perhaps, we are to understand, that as sure as the stone which Joshua set up had received the words engraved upon it, and would retain them, so, they might depend upon it, that "the shepherd" and "stone of Israel," every where present, would be witness of Atheism and Idolatry in all their forms, in every age; and as Atheists and Idolaters were, left "without excuse," so, the impenitent, without exception, would at last be left "without remedy." "So Joshua let the people depart, every man to his inheritance." Soon after the people were thus dismissed, we are told, that "Joshua died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash."

LETTER XXV.

WHEN David lamented the death of Abner, he said, "Know ye not that a great man is fallen in Israel?" This was saying a great deal in a few words; for he who is a great man in Israel, is a great man indeed: Yet few even in Israel, were greater than Joshua. In the course of this work, we have seen his rise and government; we have seen him also in the decline of life, and in his departing hour; we have seen his zeal for God, his affection for the people, his influence among them, and his authority over them; and, in each view, we have seen both the great and good man in Joshua. He was of the tribe of Ephraim, and of the seed of Joseph; in many things a type of Christ, in all things indebted to him; for, by the grace of Christ, he not only was what he was, but is what he is. He who reads the life of Joshua, or, indeed, the life of any of the faithful servants of God, with this in view, will always read it with advantage; for this will lead him to glorify God in the lives and labours of his servants, and best encourage him to follow their example.

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IT is the peculiar glory of a great character among men, that it naturally leads you to admire him who formed it, more than the person who sustains it; and this is obviously an essential difference between the moral character of them who subdued Canaan, and theirs whom they subdued. What was most shining in the characters of the conquered was so blended with what was idolatrous and immoral, that the more they at any time engaged the attention of Israel, the greater was their danger of being drawn aside from God into the most detestable abominations. And, as I conceive, it had been much more unlikely for Israel to have been so frequently and fatally ensnared by the manners of the heathen, as it is well known they were, if some things in the conduct of their common enemy had not appeared to them engaging and alluring. The pomp of their princes and priests, the politeness of their nobility, the wisdom of their philosophers, with the personal charms and pleasing address of many of their sons and daughters, appear to me to have been so many avenues by which sin entered, and by which she made her fetters strong: thus gaining an ascendancy over her willing captives, she led them, but none else, bound and blind-fold whither she pleased.—Thus were many of old ensnared; and are not many now? Has not

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an undue regard to the same things, (notwithstanding all the cautions, and all the examples some have had to warn them of their danger) made too many in the present age neglect matters of the last importance, and been the occasion of gradually introducing them first, into such company, and then, into such connections, as they once thought it impossible even to approve? Thus when the serpent, wrapt up in many an intricate fold, has all those folds unwreathed, to enjoy the fervours of the meridian sun, too often has he attracted the traveller's attention; who, while gazing thoughtless on the shining foe, forgot, alas! his food was dust, and that his sting was mortal: thus ensnared, he nearer, and still nearer drew; till, at length, he found his retreat impracticable, and his resistance vain!

As religion itself consists in character, and should be estimated according to that of its divine Author, and those of its professors, as they are delineated in the word of God; as the characters of men are often seen in the truest light by contrasting one with another, and as this may lead you to distinguish between what is essential, and what is only circumstantial in a matter of so much importance, I have made the preceding observations on this subject; and I shall now make some additional remarks on the same subject, which, I hope, you will consider and improve. To this end,

end, I would advise you, not only to contrast the characters of men with men, but of the same man with himself ; comparing what he once was, with what he now is ; and in doing this, if, from that unerring rule of human conduct, the scripture, you know what he ought to be, this practice will often lead you to foresee what in various circumstances you may expect from others, and, on the other hand, what it is probable, they may expect from you. And by an humble attention to these things, you will, in the end, be convinced, that many things are shining in the characters of men, that are not solid ; that however pleasing these things may be to some, they are always defective, and often pernicious : you will see too, that the variegated productions of false religion are no better, and, in fact, no other : in a word, you will, I hope, be convinced, that as good fruit can only be expected from good seed, so, where that is sowed, if good fruit, in some proportion, be not produced, you may conclude the soil is wretched, and destruction sure.

I forbear to enlarge any farther on the character of the conquerors of Canaan, because, properly speaking, there was but one Conqueror ; of whose character I intended to take some notice ; believing you will consider it both your duty and your interest to regard it.

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You cannot but know, that the sacred historians continually ascribe the conquest of Canaan to Jehovah. They represent him as “a man of war,” as “the God of armies,” and as “Lord of all their hosts.” The pious among them, always gave him the glory of every victory, for which they had the greatest reason; for he was not only their wisdom and strength, he not only “taught their hands to war, and their fingers to fight,” but frequently “fought for them” before, and in the reduction of Canaan, as he did not for any other people. Not to mention the plagues of Egypt, which necessarily preceded all their future conquests, how astonishing were the displays of divine power in their favour in many other places! Without any effort of theirs, God destroyed Pharoah and his host at the Red Sea, and afterwards, threw down the walls of Jericho; he made the nations to tremble at their approach, and to retire at their presence. Or if, for a season, the most powerful combinations were formed against them, the “sun and moon stood still” to confound, and hailstones were thrown from heaven to destroy their adversaries! The conqueror, you see then, was Jehovah; whose character in this conquest, not only ought to be considered, but is that, which, above all others, deserves our attention.

THE character and the conduct of the Deity,
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and of all his creatures, mutually illustrate each other. If we are ignorant, therefore, of the divine conduct, we must likewise be ignorant of the divine character; and, as to particular views, if the latter be unknown, the former will not be understood: and so far as any man is ignorant of both, his knowledge of religion and providence will be found delusive, and his profession of the former, vain. The better to understand this subject, let me request you to withdraw your thoughts for a moment from the great Object in view, and to fix them on a creature; and perhaps you will then confess, that my reasoning is true, and my conclusions are just.—On whom then are they fixed? It is no matter; only let it be supposed, that you are neither acquainted with his character, nor with his conduct, and I ask, of what use, in a moral view, is your knowledge of that man? Can you, in any matter of importance, depend on his promise, or be entirely devoted to his interest? Impossible. But suppose it was not, would it be your wisdom, in such a situation, to do the one, or be the other? Religion, however, is full of wisdom. Know me, trust me, love me, and serve me, are the wise, and invariable order which God has established in our walk with him: and you may be sure that grace will neither promote nor approve any thing which is

destructive of this divine order. But, I presume, enough has been said to convince you, that an attention to the character of God on every subject that relates either to his government, or grace, is absolutely necessary; and if so, you cannot doubt of the propriety of our attending to it in the present subject.

THE divine Character may be considered both in a relative and moral view. I might, indeed, mention a third view, but these are the principal. When you find it asserted that "God is," can you think seriously on that assertion without desiring to know "what he is?" But what he is, you cannot conceive, otherwise than by considering what those relations are which certainly subsist between God and us. The words Creator, Lawgiver, Governour, Preserver, Judge, and Saviour, not only contain so many relative ideas, but immediately convey them to our minds; and are, in truth, so many relative characters of the same God, displayed in the person of the Father, of the Son, and of the divine Spirit. These characters are all of them the glory of God; but they are not his chief glory; no, his being the Creator, Lawgiver, Governour, Preserver, Judge, and Saviour, is not his highest glory; but his being what he is in each, and that in all, which his word and works have manifested him to be from age to age.

SHOULD.

SHOULD you not immediately comprehend what I have said on this subject, perhaps the following attempt to illustrate it, may not be unacceptable. You know then, that I am a father, a master, and a minister of the gospel ; these are relative characters which I sustain, and these are my honour ; but it would be afflicting if these were my greatest honour ; for, it is possible, that the worst of men may have the same relative characters ; if therefore, through grace, I should support each in a becoming manner, if, by my conduct, it should appear, that I exercise the authority and affection which become a father, the prudence and compassion that adorn the character of a master, and should manifest that wisdom and faithfulness which our Lord requires in the character of a minister, this surely, would be a much greater honour to me ; as it would certainly be much more to the good of others, and consequently, to the glory of God : and this, is what, in such a case, I should call my moral character ; not indeed in that low sense in which this term is sometimes used, or as opposed to that which is spiritual, but as including what is properly opposite to that which is only relative or natural :

THE particular relative character of God, now to be considered, is that of a Conqueror ; and we must judge of this, as of all other relative characters,

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by the manner in which it is supported ; or, in other words, by the morality that shines through it, and is inseparably connected with it. Now, if you admit the fact, that God was the Conqueror of Canaan, as I trust you do, what can you wish to see exemplified in such a character that is not manifest in his ? His power to conquer the Canaanites, or whom he pleases, is unquestionable ; so, I should think, is his right to subdue his enemies, and his knowledge to determine who they are. But the manner in which he subdued them, appears to some unaccountable ; and this, so far as I can learn, has been most objected to in the conquest before us. But why should it ? Is there any reason to suppose that God could make use of such means to accomplish any end he ever had in view, which, as used by him, were either unwise or unjust ? Would it not be much more becoming in us, to entertain some doubt of our ability, or even our inclination, to discover what is wise and just in the divine conduct, than to imagine there is any thing in it which is not so ? For doubts like the former, there is too much foundation ; for the latter, none at all. Let us never apprehend that the ways of the Almighty should be regulated by ours, which are, it is well known, as irregular as they are various. To expect it, is unsufferable vanity ; vanity which God has often confounded,

founded, but never gratified. We cannot but know, that our enemies are by no means in the same situation respecting us, as the enemies of God are with respect to him. Our enemies are always our equals as to nature, and sometimes, as to character also ; nay, in this view, perhaps, they are our superiors ; but can any thing like this be said concerning the enemies of God ? Our temptations to conquer our enemies are many, and great ; but will any dare to assert that this is the case with our Maker, “ who cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man ? ” But after all, what compassion do we shew to our enemies, even to those we are resolved if possible to spare, and whom we punish at last, only because their insolence and obstinacy make it absolutely necessary—what compassion, I say, do we ever shew in such a case, which God did not manifest to the inhabitants of Canaan ? Do we repeatedly warn them of their danger ? The Canaanites were repeatedly warned. Do we give them space to repent ? The long suffering of God towards them was astonishing. Do we, at last, spare such among them as ingenuously acknowledge their crimes, implore our pardon, and give proper assurances that they are willing, in future, to be subject to us ? Such, all such, of the inhabitants of Canaan were spared, and saved, in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation.

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BUT still, it is objected, 'God might have prevented their sinning against him.' True: and he might have prevented the existence of sin absolutely, had he so pleased; but, if moral evil and blame-worthiness be the same thing, then, they only are to blame who are the subjects of it, and they, you will remember, are always "left without excuse." On the whole, whatever difficulties attend this subject, it is plain, that the nature and degree of moral evil, at all times, are perfectly understood by him who is resolved that sin shall not go unpunished; by him, crimes and criminals are attentively considered, and all circumstances accurately weighed; surely then, it becomes us to justify our Judge, and to keep at the remotest distance from censuring his conduct.

IT is farther objected, that 'God might have punished what was evil in the Canaanites without sending the Israelites against them.' This is granted: and we have seen that in several instances it was not the Israelites, but the Almighty himself, who took vengeance on them; but were they, or are their advocates, on that account, the better pleased? Were the Sodomites reconciled to the flame that consumed them, or to him that sent it? Were Pharoah and his host reconciled to their sinking as lead in the mighty waters? Were the men of Jericho reconciled to the sudden and miraculous

raculous manner in which the walls of their city betrayed their trust, any more than they were to the conquerors' sword to which they were then exposed? Or, were Jabin and his mighty host better pleased with the stones which fell from heaven upon them, than they were with the sword of the Lord in the hand of Joshua and Israel? The obvious answer to each of these questions may convince you, that the present objection, like every other that is made against the divine conduct, is both vain and vile.

IT is again objected, 'that God does not always thus avenge himself on those who are said to be his enemies in this world.' This also is granted: but can it be imagined that if this were the case it would be acceptable to them who make it? The truth is, there has always been a sufficient number of instances of the divine displeasure against the wicked and impenitent in this world, to convince the unprejudiced, that no man can sin with any ground to expect he shall escape, or elude the just judgment of God; and yet, the manner in which delinquents are punished in this world, is such, as is not only perfectly consistent with the idea of future punishment, but is remarkably calculated to awaken, and to keep awake, that awful expectation.

244 CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

THUS it appears, that the character and conduct of God mutually illustrate each other; and as these are manifested to us, and magnified by us, his design in this, and in every other conquest, will be best understood; and I think, I may add, with such advantages they will be best improved.

L E T.

LETTER XXVI.

WHEN the husbandman “breaks up his fallow ground,” he has various ends in view. He ploughs in order to sow; sows, in hope of reaping what he sowed to considerable advantage; reaps, to receive the pleasing increase into the appointed barn; lays up his corn, with a view to thresh it, and to winnow it from the chaff; separates it from the chaff, in order to use, or sell it; and sells it, to supply himself and family with what is wanting for food and cloathing. All this, and more, he had in view before he yoked his team, or ere he drove his plough-share o'er his fallowed field.—The world, at large, is the field of God. As such, he never injures it, but he certainly roots out the noxious weeds and thorns, and leaves some places barren, and makes others fruitful, as it seems good in his sight. He never acts without design; and his immediate design is connected with another, and that, with another, and so on, as so many links in one chain, all leading to, and

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inseparably connected with his ultimate design ; the good of the faithful, and the glory of himself.

THE more extensively we are acquainted with God's designs in all his operations, the more, if our corruption does not prevent it, shall we admire the whole of his conduct, and the counsel of his will, by which it is always conducted. But some are strangely inattentive to this subject, and others as strangely partial. People of this unhappy way of thinking, either recite facts without attending to any particular design, or else, perhaps, they make the whole an allegory and typical of just what they please. Should these letters ever fall into such hands, you must expect to hear me censured for troubling you with such an account of things, as will appear to the former tedious, and to the latter trifling ; the one, censuring it as unimportant, and the other as unentertaining : That many things contained in the preceding narrative were typical of future events, and of such events as are of the greatest importance, I cannot doubt ; but then, those parts, I think, should always be interpreted with the greatest caution, in strict connection with the literal meaning of the text, and, as far as possible, with, what I will venture to call, the fulness of God's design.

You

You will not imagine from what I have said, I mean to insinuate, that I am acquainted with the fulness of God's design concerning this conquest. No, I am deeply conscious that, of any subject on which I write, or speak, I "see but in part." 'I thought so once, but now I know it.' But by what little I do know, it appears to me, that the design of this conquest ought not to be so confined, as if the Almighty had but one thing in view. We have reason to suppose, apart from all that is typical, of which I had no intention to treat in these letters, that his comprehensive design was, to manifest what, in various views, he is to man, what men are to him; what, in views so various, we may expect from our Maker, and what it is, in each view, that God expects from us. Than this, can we think of any design that is greater, or more worthy the Divine Being, or, which can be to us, equally important? And why should we suppose that God had any thing less in view in the conquest of Canaan, or in transmitting an account of it to us; or indeed, in any thing that stands on record as a part of the inspired volume? But if you admit this to be the leading, and all-comprehending design of the Almighty in his word, and works, and that Christ, in every age, is the grand medium by which it is manifested to

our advantage, you will find yourself so interested in the preceding narrative, as it is impossible you should in any other view. You will consider yourself no longer as an enquirer merely into ancient history ; but, if I may so say, as a party concerned. For, while you are reading the history of others, you will find that you are, at the same time, reading a lecture of instruction to yourself ; because, as God is manifested to you, by what you read of him, and others, in the sacred history, as you are affected with what is there revealed and recorded, as you believe it, and are influenced by it, and as you are thereby taught what God expects from you, and what you may expect from him, according as things operate in each of these views, you will best determine what you have been, and what you now are in his sight : nor by this view of things, will you fail of discerning one very essential difference between the word of God, and the works of men ; between that history which is called sacred, and that which is profane.

WHEN I read the foregoing history with this design in view, I not only see, but feel the force of Rollin's admirable observations in the preface to his first volume of Antient History. ' It must be confessed,' says that great man, ' that if we compare the attentive, beneficent and sensible manner in which the Almighty presided antiently

over

over his people, with that which appeared in his governing all other nations of the earth, one would be apt to conclude, that the latter were foreign and indifferent to him. God looked upon the holy nation as his own domain and inheritance ; he resided in the midst of it, like as a master in his house, and as a father in his family. Israel was his son, his first born. He made it his delight, to improve the mind of this son from his earliest infancy, and to instil in it maxims of the purest wisdom. He used to reveal himself to Israel by his oracles ; appointed the most wonderful men to be his governors ; and displayed the most astonishing miracles in his protection ; who could forbear, at the sight of so many glorious privileges, to cry aloud with the prophet, “ Judah is his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion ?”

“ NEVERTHELESS this God, although forgot by the nations, and seemingly forgetting them, he yet exercised for ever over them a sovereign empire, which, though concealed behind the vail of ordinary events, and such a conduct and government as was merely human, was not therefore less real or divine ; “ The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,” says the prophet, “ the world and they that dwell therein.” ’Twould be an error highly injurious to the Almighty, to suppose him the master of but one single family, and not of all nations in the universe.’

‘ THIS important truth is discovered, by our going back to the most remote antiquity and the origin of prophane history ; I mean, to the dispersion of the posterity of Noah into the several countries of the earth where they settled. Liberty, chance, views of interest, a love for certain countries, and such like motives, were, in outward appearance, the only causes of the different choice which men made in these various migrations. But the scriptures inform us, that amidst the trouble and confusion that followed the sudden change which was produced in the language of Noah’s descendants, God presided invisibly over all their counsels and deliberations ; that nothing was transacted but by the Almighty’s appointment ; and that he only guided and settled all mankind, agreeably to the dictates of his mercy and justice : “ The Lord scattered them abroad *from thence* upon the face of the earth.” Gen. xi. 9.

‘ ’Tis true indeed that God, even in these early ages, shewed a peculiar regard for that people, whom he should one day consider as his own. He pointed out the country which they were to inherit : he caused it to be possessed by another laborious nation, who made it their care to cultivate and adorn it ; and improve, by all possible methods, the future inheritance of the Israelites. He then fixed in that country, the like number of families,

families, as were to be settled in it, when the sons of Israel should, at the appointed time, take possession of it ; and did not suffer any of the nations which were not subject to the curse pronounced by Noah against Canaan, to enter an inheritance that was to be given up entirely to the Israelites. Deut. xxxii. 8.—But this peculiar regard of God to his future people, does not interfere with that which he had for the rest of the nations of the earth, as is evident from the two passages of scripture above cited, which teach us, that the entire succession of ages is present to him ; that nothing is transacted in the whole universe, but by his appointment ; and that he directs the several events of it from age to age.—Such are the observations of Rollin ; and observations more comprehensive, and just, on this subject, you will not easily find.

You must be sensible, that while we are strangers to what a person has in view, without we are so wise as to suspend our thoughts, which is too seldom the case, we are very liable to form a wrong judgment both concerning what he says and what he does ; and since we must be convinced that we know but little of other people's private intentions, we are justly reprehensible, when in haste, and with supercilious severity, we boldly venture to censure their actions. And we may farther observe, in proportion as the person whom

we thus censure, is our superior, and his character is established, in such proportion, does the criminality of our conduct always increase. Who can think of this, and not be ashamed when he recollects in how many instances he has thus treated his Maker? Who can seriously recollect such instances, and not see reason to adopt the words of Job: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea twice, but I will proceed no further?"

I SHALL now put a period to this letter, by reminding you of that general, and comprehensive design, which I have already supposed the Almighty had in view in the various events which have now so long engaged our attention; and by informing you, what, I think, may be justly inferred from that view of the subject; which I wish you to compare with reason and with revelation.

THAT comprehensive design which I supposed the Almighty had in view in crowning the arms of Israel with conquest, and by that, and other means, covering the inhabitants of Canaan with lasting confusion, was thus expressed: It was, I said, 'To manifest what, in various views he is to man, what men are to him, and what in views so various we may expect from our Maker, and what it is in each view, that God expects from

us.' Now according to this idea of God's design, in the conquest of Canaan, it appears to me, we may justly infer, that, God is just and good to all men ; gracious to the penitent, and in making them so ; the unwearied deliverer of all that put their trust in him, always " taking pleasure in them that fear him, and in those that hope in his mercy ;" but at the same time, the constant avenger of all those who, as we have often expressed it, are really enemies to his government and grace.

IT also appears to me, that whatever God is to us, he is through the mediation of Jesus Christ ; that it is by him the true and full Character of the Deity is manifested to man, and by him also, that the purposes of God are revealed, and the "counsel of his will" fulfilled. By him we must be justified, or condemned ; saved or destroyed to "the utmost !" He then, who doth not receive and revere him, as the Father hath commanded, will find, that "God," even in Christ, "is a consuming fire!"—"Be wise therefore, be instructed ; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him!"

LETTER XXVII.

WHAT I proposed to write concerning the conquest of Canaan, I have now finished. And as I have the pleasure to find that what I have written on this subject meets with your approbation, to make it the more useful, I shall give you, in this letter, a general Index to the whole work, and the Contents of the twenty-six letters you have received.

ALL that I have written may be divided into three parts. The *first* part may be considered as an Introduction. The *second* is a Narrative of those Transactions that preceded, and of those which completed the Conquest of Canaan. The *last* part lays before you the manner in which this Conquest was improved, the Character of the Conquerors, and the Design of the whole.

THE *first* of these three parts is necessarily imperfect; as a more particular detail of what you find in it, would not have comported with what I had principally in view; nor could it be contained in those limits I proposed to regard. All therefore, that seemed

seemed proper by way of Introduction, is contained in the seven first Letters.—The viiith Letter, is merely a Transition from what is Introductory to the Narrative which was then before me.—The *second* part commences with the ixth Letter, and is closed with the xxth: it contains a Narrative of those things which happened to Israel from the time of their leaving Egypt to that happy period when “the Land,” which they had subdued, “rested from war.”—If this narrative be sometimes interrupted, it is only to introduce such remarks, or to remove such objections, as I imagined would make it more useful and agreeable to you than if they had been omitted.—The *third* part, according to this division, begins with the xxist Letter, and ends with the xxvith. It is in this part, you will find in what manner the conquest of Canaan was immediately improved by them that subdued it, the Character of the Conquerors considered, and what I apprehend to be the leading Design of that memorable Conquest.

SUCH are the out-lines of my poor Performance. Poor, however, as in a comparative view it is, if, on the whole, I did not think it in some degree deserved your regard, and that it was written in such a manner as to afford me a probability it would edify, as well as entertain you, you are convinced, I believe, I had never sent you a single Letter on this interesting Subject.

THE Contents of the twenty-six Letters you have received, in the order they were written, are as follow:

THE *first* Letter, is, a general Introduction to the whole Work.—The *second*, is, On the Names, Boundaries, Extent, and Divisions of the Land of Canaan.—The *third*, On the Prospects of Canaan.—The *fourth*, On its Produce.—The *fifth*, On the moral Character of its ancient Inhabitants.—The *sixth*, On the Equity of the Divine Conduct towards them.—The *seventh*, On the same Subject.—The *eighth*, is a Transition from the Introduction to the Narrative.—The *ninth*, On the Journies of the Children of Israel from Raamses to Rephidim.—The *tenth*, On their Journies from Rephidim to Mount Sinai.—The *eleventh*, On their Journies from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea.—The *twelfth*, On their Journies from Kadesh-barnea, by the wilderness of Zin to Zalmonah.—The *thirteenth*, On their Journies from Zalmonah, to the Mountains of Abarim.—The *fourteenth*, On the Opposition of Balak and Balaam.—The *fifteenth*, On their Victory over the Midianites, and the grant of the Land on the east side of the Jordan, to the Tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half Tribe of Manasseh.—The *sixteenth*, On the Death and Character of Moses.—The *seventeenth*, On the Call of Joshua, and his Conduct prior

to

to the taking of Jericho.—The *eighteenth*, On the taking of Jericho, and the Sin and Punishment of Achan.—The *nineteenth*, On the taking of Ai, the submission of Gibeon, and the Conquest which Joshua obtained over the Southern Confederacy of the Kings of Canaan.—The *twentieth*, On the Conquest which Joshua obtained over the Northern Confederacy of the Kings of Canaan; after which, “the Land rested from War.”—The *twenty-first*, On Joshua’s Dividing the Land by Lot.—The *twenty-second*, On the same subject; in which, some notice is taken of setting up the Tabernacle at Shiloh, and of the Cities of Refuge.—The *twenty-third*, On the Return of the two Tribes and a half to their Inheritance in Gilead and Bashan.—The *twenty-fourth*, On Joshua’s dying Charge to Israel.—The *twenty-fifth*, On the Character of the Conquerors, and of the People whom they conquered; with some Observations on the Relative and Moral Character of Jehovah; to whom the whole of this Conquest is ascribed.—The *twenty-sixth*, is, On the Design of the Conquest, and the Manner in which you ought to improve the affecting Subject.—You may yet expect another Letter from me; in which I mean to take some notice of the Authors I have consulted, and the assistance I have received in writing the preceding.

LET-

LETTER XXVIII.

My Son,

THE Subject of this Letter, reminds me, once more, of Rollin's admirable preface to his Antient History. 'To adorn and enrich my own' [work] says Rollin, 'I will be so ingenuous as to confess that I don't scruple, nor am ashamed to rifle wherever I come, and that I often do not cite the Authors from whom I transcribe, because of the liberty I take to make some slight alterations.'—'I am very sensible,' continues this accomplished and modest writer, 'that 'tis not so much for a person's reputation to make use of other men's labours, and that 'tis a kind of renunciation to the name and quality of an Author. But I am not over fond of this title; and shall be extremely well pleased, and think myself very happy, if I can but deserve the name of a good Compiler, and furnish out a tolerable entertainment for my readers, who will not be very solicitous to enquire what hand it comes from, provided they are but pleased with it.'—Why then should I make any the least formal parade,

parade, in informing you whom I have read, and what works I have consulted in writing the **Conquest of Canaan**, when Rollin has declined the appearance of such vanity in compiling his **Ancient History**; especially as I have taken the same liberty with most of the Authors to whom I am indebted, that he informs us he took with those whom he transcribed?

SUPPORTED by such authority, you will readily excuse me from troubling you, at present, with a catalogue of Writers Names, and particular references to their works; and the more so, as, in looking over what I have written, I find there are very few Authors to whom I have been at all indebted, whose names are not mentioned already.

— The Bible is the principal book I have consulted; and the words cited from it, as was promised, are generally distinguished by inverted commas; yet not without some mistakes, which I found it almost impossible wholly to avoid.

BUT it becomes me to own, that I have not only been assisted by the Authors mentioned in the course of these Letters, but that I have received assistance also from my friends, who were so obliging as to look over them as they were written. Their criticisms were kindness; and I am convinced, had they been possessed of patience and opportunity to have multiplied their

their Remarks, provided, I also had been possessed of wisdom sufficient to have properly availed myself of them, what I have written would have been much more deserving your notice than it is.

AFTER all, perfection, in any thing that man can produce, is not to be expected. A Writer, whose fine taste in composition will never be questioned, except it be by those who have no relish for such productions, has justly and elegantly observed, that, ' It is indeed the necessary condition of every work of human science, small as well as great, to advance towards perfection by slow degrees ; by an approximation, which, though it may still carry it forward, yet will certainly never bring it to the point to which it tends.' If so, it cannot be expected, that a series of familiar Letters, from a Father to a Son, written as various avocations would give him leisure to finish them ; it cannot be expected, I say, that such a production should be without its imperfections. Should these Letters, therefore, come into the hands of any beside yourself, it is hoped, that proper allowances will be made ; and it is presumed, that such will recollect, that some things in my Style, and manner of Address, that would be unbecoming, if not unpardonable, had I been writing to them, are allowable, at least, in writing to you.—There is such a thing as teaching without seeming to teach ; and, I believe,

this

this is sometimes the most acceptable, if not the most successful way of communicating instruction. And should these Letters teach any young person, besides yourself, what was not known before, it will be without making any such pretension : they cannot, therefore, reasonably be offended ; nor, should this be the case, will either their Parents or Tutors, I hope, be displeased.

I CANNOT conclude this Letter, without promising you an additional sheet by way of Appendix ; for as I have hitherto said but little of the different forms of government the Hebrews were under, and as I may never write to you on the Loss of CANAAN, or on those chequered events which attended that nation from the death of Joshua to the death of Jesus, and as the shortest sketch of these things may be of some service to you, and excite you to a regular reading of the Scriptures, with greater attention than if such an Appendix had been omitted, I have determined to add one to these Letters. But, by a regular reading of the Scriptures, I do not mean to recommend the reading them in the order of the books and chapters as they are bound up in our Bibles, but to read them in the order of the Events therein related ; which is also recommended by Dr. Lightfoot, and others. I am, &c.



APPENDIX.

IN the Letters I sent you on the Conquest of Canaan, it was repeatedly observed, that the grace and government of God are inseparably connected; and the more you attend to the conduct of the Israelites in every age, the more, I believe, you will be convinced that, in proportion as the former was received, the latter, in every view, was always revered; ~~and~~ as that was abused, this was despised.

THE form of Government that first prevailed in the world was Patriarchal. This, with those who feared God, continued from Adam to Moses: during that period, the Sovereign and the Father, with them, were united in the same person. As families branched out one from another, the first father, while living, in several instances, extended his authority wide as the family spread, and was revered and respected as the guide and governor of those who sprang from him, in matters of a civil and sacred nature. Thus Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob, ruled in their families, and, in general, were revered by their sons.

‘In

‘In these early ages,’ says Rollin, ‘every father was the supreme head of his family; the arbiter and judge of whatever contests and divisions might arise within it; the natural legislator over his little society; the defender and protector of those who, by their birth, education and weakness, were under his protection and safeguard; and of whom he was so extremely tender that he was as careful of their interest as his own.’—Exactly how long this kind of government continued, or what was the extent of the patriarchal power, I find concerning this, little more than conjecture. That a different form of government, in some respects, took place in Egypt, seems probable; and that the Hebrews were under a Theocracy in the Wilderness, is certain.

MANY and great are the encomiums that are made on the patriarchal age. It is called ‘the golden age;’ and Poets, and Historians, would persuade us, that governors were then, all of them, virtuous, and their people quite happy. But the truth is, in every form of government that ever yet existed among men, some governors have but ill supported their important character, and they who supported it best, did not always meet with such returns from their subjects, or such obedience from their children, as might have been expected. As your acquaintance with the world increases, you

you will have repeated opportunities of observing, that where the authority and affection of a Father are exerted and displayed with wisdom, the family under his care is not always sensible of it, much less, are they who compose it, so thankful as you may imagine. It is rather a pleasing, than probable supposition, that such things never happened in antient times. Nature in every age is the same. And when you seriously recollect what is recorded of Cain, Ham, Ishmael, and others, you will perhaps be of opinion, that what is represented as a ‘golden age,’ and as ‘an age of sweet simplicity, and smiling content,’ is rather ideal than real. If this delightful age be viewed in a mirrour that will not deceive, you will find the gold was mixed with dross; the simplicity with cunning, and the contentment with complaint. But it is the way of the world to magnify what is past, to justify their complaints and censures, concerning what is present. “ Say not thou, What is the cause why the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.” “ In the present *evil* world,” some periods, it must be granted, are more pleasing than others; but none are so pleasing as to lay a foundation for changing the Apostle’s epithet, concerning it. Evil persons make evil times; and there have been always a sufficient number of such

in this world, to try the patience of the upright, and to manifest that those who are “unholy” will always be “unthankful;” and, in proportion as they are so, they will ever be unhappy.

WHEN the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, from that time to the days of “Samuel the Prophet,” the theocratical form of Government prevailed among them. While this peculiar Government continued, the Divine Being was considered, by them, not only as their Creator, in common with the rest of mankind, but as their God and King.

As their Creator, he required from them, what he requires of all men, that “they should love the Lord with all their heart, and with all their souls, and with all their strength, and with all their mind, and their neighbours as themselves.”

As their God, he prescribed to them such modes of worship, and ceremonies, as might keep up the idea of their being, to God, “a peculiar, and special people, above all people that were on the face of the earth;” and, at the same time, remind them, that, as they had been favoured with those discoveries and expectations from God, as their God, which none else had, so, they were under lasting and peculiar obligations to believe and obey him in all things; and were taught to consider “the obedience of faith” as being, it-

self, Salvation ; and that it was both the evidence and earnest of all that God had promised such should enjoy in any future state of the church in this world, or in the world to come.

As their King, God was the Sovereign of their body politic ; and gave them judicial, or political laws, relating to their government, and civil life. By him all laws were enacted, war was declared, and magistrates appointed ; in which three things, the *summa potestas*, or Sovereign Authority, as Dr. Jennings observes, of any state, consisteth.—There is abundant proof of each of these assertions in the five books of Moses ; but the nature of this Appendix, will only permit me to mention one, which has respect to the last.—And that all magistrates, and officers, were appointed by the Lord, is evident from the famous speech of Jethro to Moses, when he came to see his son-in-law in the wilderness. Jethro, you know, advised Moses to make some necessary regulations in the mode of administering justice among the people who were under his care ; but being fully acquainted with the peculiar form of their government, after giving his advice, he said, “ If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then shalt thou be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace : ” finely, as well as plainly intimating, that his ad-

vice was no farther worthy his son's attention than it accorded with the will of God. And "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets," was pleased, at this time, to reveal his will, even to Moses, by Jethro: the regulations therefore, which he had so modestly recommended, were, with the consent of the people, immediately attended to without contradiction. But though the consent of the people, and the concurrence of Moses, on this occasion, were very desirable, yet neither the one nor the other was essential to the existence, or perfection of any part of the Divine Law. As God was their "Lawgiver," so, the revelation of his will, in any precept, or prohibition, whether it was approved, or disapproved, was always law; and it is so still; "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

DURING the time of their Theocracy in the wilderness, as God himself was the King of the Hebrew Nation, so Moses, as Dr. Jennings observes, was his viceroy, in whom the supream ecclesiastical as well as civil power, under God, was lodged. By him Aaron, and his sons, were put into the priesthood; the royal palace, or tabernacle, was built by his direction; by him it was consecrated; he gave the nation the whole body

of their laws ; he was commander in chief of all their forces. All this did Moses by commission from God, or rather, God did it by Moses. So that though the servant of God, yet, as chief among men, he is called “ King in Jeshurun.” For though government by kings, properly so called, was not set up till the days of Saul, yet the title was more antient, and given to persons of high rank and great authority, though they were never crowned, never attended with royal pomp, nor invested with the regalia : in particular it was applied to the Judges. Jud. ix. 6.

JOSHUA succeeded Moses as captain general of Israel. But though he succeeded Moses, as God’s viceroy or lieutenant, and had the same authority, military and civil, which his predecessor had ; yet, in some respects, he was much inferior to him ; for besides that he had not the honour of being a lawgiver, as Moses had, he was never admitted to that immediate and familiar manner of conversing with God, with which Moses was favoured.

As the legislative office which Moses had possessed, expired at his death, so did the office of Joshua, as captain general of the hosts of the Lord, which he held for life, expire with him. The land of Canaan being conquered, and the tribes of Israel being settled in the peaceable pos-

cession of their inheritances, before his decease, there was no occasion for the particular office of Joshua to be continued. Offices and officers are ordained of God to answer some important end, and when that is fully answered, they cease. The Judges, therefore, did not so much succeed Joshua in the government of Israel as follow him; and the government now put on the aristocratical form; excepting that, in respect to the peculiar supremacy of Jehovah, it was still monarchical.

THE Judges we read of after the death of Joshua, seem to be raised up, and appointed only on particular occasions, to deliver Israel from the power of some oppressor. Of Samuel only it is said, that he "judged Israel all the days of his life." The Government was thus in the hands of these extraordinary Judges for almost three hundred years. Their names, and the number of years that they judged Israel, in the book of Judges, stand thus:

Othniel, of Judah, judged Israel	40 years.
Ehud, of Benjamin,	- 80
Barak, (with Deborah) of Napthali,	40
Gideon, of Manasseh,	- - 40
Abimelech, Gideon's son,	- 3
Tola, of Issachar,	- - - 23
Jair of Manasseh,	- - - 22
	Jephthah,

Jephthah, of Manasseh,	-	6	years
Ibsan, of Judah,	-	7	
Elon, of Zebulon,	-	10	
Abdon, of Ephraim,	-	8	
Sampson, of Dan,	-	20	

In all, 299 years.

THE oppressors that these Judges were raised up to deliver the children of Israel from, were the following; Cushan-rishathaim; Eglon, of Moab; Jabin, of Canaan; the Midianites; the Ammonites, and the Philistines.

Cushan oppressed Israel,	-	8	years.
Eglon,	-	18	
Jabin,	-	20	
The Midianites,	-	7	
The Ammonites,	-	18	
The Philistines,	-	40	

In all, 111 years.

AFTER the death of Sampson, there was a chasm, or interregnum, to the time of Samuel's judging Israel; and, it is supposed, that in this chasm, or interregnum, those complaints were made of "there being no king in Israel," and of "every man's doing that which was right in his own

eyes ;" this is mentioned once and again, as an extraordinary thing, and as a calamitous circumstance to the nation. — At this time, Eli, the high Priest, was the principal man in the commonwealth of Israel. He continued in office forty years ; and was of the family of Ithamar. When, and on what occasion the priesthood was taken from the family of Eleazar, in which family it had been for seven generations, is not very evident ; however, it reverted back to the house of Eleazar in the person of Zadok ; who was, I think, the " faithful priest" that God promised Eli he would " raise up," and to whom he declared, " that every one that was left in Eli's house, should come and crouch to him for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread, and should say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."

NEVER was this declaration, " Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," more affectingly verified, than in the instance of Samuel and Eli. Samuel was the son of an obscure country Levite, " of Ramathaim Zophim, of mount Ephraim," yet he, while a child, " ministered before the Lord, and grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men ;" while Eli, though an aged man, and chief minister in church

church and state, by his criminal negligence towards his sons, sunk into disgrace, and brought on himself, “ and his daughter-in-law, Phinehas’s wife,” insupportable distress. His two sons, “ who knew not the Lord,” perished in their folly ; but Samuel prospered ; for he knew and loved the Lord, and served him, with integrity of heart, all his days.

BUT “ it came to pass,” we are told, “ when Samuel was old, that he made his sons Judges over Israel ; not that he made them his successors, I apprehend, but ordinary Judges ; yet even of this honour, it should seem, the sons of so great a man as Samuel were thought unworthy ; for it is said, “ his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.” “ The Elders and people,” who seldom were long contented with the wisest appointments in their favour, and who were not only given to changes, but strangely inclined to imitate those that knew not God, now made an application to Samuel for such a change in their Government as would make them “ like all the nations ;” and they thought that, Samuel’s age, on the one hand, and the charge they had exhibited against his sons, on the other, would justify their request. In vain did Samuel lay before them the sin and folly of their petition ; they

“ refused to obey his voice,” and said, “ Nay, but we will have a king over us: that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken to their voice and make them a king.” He also said, “ They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods: so do they also unto thee.”

THE form of Government that now prevailed in Israel, was, Monarchical; I mean to say, that, from this time, they were governed by such Monarchs as were men; and by such men as were not only possessed of regal Authority, but of the regalia attending it. The government of the Hebrew Nation by kings, from Saul to the Captivity of Babylon, was about five hundred years.

THE kings will be sufficiently distinguished by dividing them into three classes. The first, of such kings as reigned over the whole Hebrew Nation; the second, of such kings as reigned over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and the third, of those who reigned over the other ten tribes.

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THE kings who reigned over the whole Hebrew Nation, were only three: Saul, David and Solomon.

THE kings who reigned over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, were, all of them, of the house of David. Their names and character are thus given by Mr. Henry: 'David the devout, Solomon the wise, Rehoboam the simple,' (in whose days the fatal division between Judah and Israel took place; after which, the kings that reigned over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin only, were) 'Abishai the valiant, Asa the upright, Jehoshaphat the religious, Jehoram the wicked, Ahaziah the profane, Joash the backslider, Amaziah the rash, Uzziah the mighty, Jotham the peaceable, Ahaz the idolater, Hezekiah the reformer, Manasseh the penitent, Amon the obscure, Josiah the tender-hearted, Jehoaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, all wicked, and such as brought ruin presently on themselves and their kingdom.' 'The number of the good and bad' Mr. Henry observes, 'is pretty near equal, but the reigns of the good were generally long, and those of the bad short. The consideration of which,' continues Mr. Henry, 'will make the state of Israel not altogether so bad in this period as at first it seems.' He farther observes, that, 'in all this history' (of the kings of Israel) 'it appears, that kings, though gods to us, are men to God, mortal and accountable.'

THE kings who reigned over the ten tribes that revolted from Rehoboam, were, Jeroboam the first, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam the second, Zachariah, Shallum Mena-hem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea: of whom, 'not one of them,' says Dr. Watts, 'was good.'

As the Hebrew Nation was divided into two distinct kingdoms from the days of Rehoboam, called the kingdom of Judah, and Israel, so, each kingdom suffered a distinct captivity; the one is called the Assyrian, the other the Babylonish captivity.

THE Assyrian captivity, to which the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, were subject, was begun in the reign of Pekah king of Israel, when Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, conquered a part of his country, and carried away the people captive to Assyria, 2 Kings xv. 29. It was afterwards compleated by Salmaneser, who took Samaria, the capital of the kingdom of Israel, after three years siege, and went up through the land, and carried away the residue of the people captive into Assyria, 2 Kings xvii. 3.

THE account that is given of their conduct when they were thus carried into captivity, is not only such as justifies God in the calamities which, for

for their iniquities, he brought upon them, but such as will lead us to admire his patience with them, and to be astonished at their profaneness in the sight of God and man. Thus it stands on record, for our instruction, in the chapter above-mentioned :

“ IN the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the Land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen (whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel), and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right, against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree ; and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them ; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger. For they served idols, whereof

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the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments, and my statutes, according to all which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them ; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divinations and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. Therefore, the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight ; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only."

SUCH were the crimes, and such the chastisement

ment of Israel ; who, falling in with the idolatrous worship and customs of the Assyrians, by whom they were carried captive, soon lost the very name of Jews and Israelites, which, by their abominations, they had long disgraced.

THE Babylonish captivity of the kingdom of Judah, or of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who adhered to the house of David, was begun by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the reign of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar “ bound in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. And he also carried away some of the vessels belonging to the house of the Lord, to furnish his own temple in Babylon.”—From hence, Dr. Jennings, and others, date the commencement of the seventy years captivity. The people, buoyed up by their false prophets, were induced to believe that these sacred vessels should be shortly brought again from Babylon ; but Jeremiah assured them of the contrary, and that all the remaining vessels should be carried after them. Jeremiah xxvii. 16, 17. Accordingly, about nine years afterwards, in the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar made a second descent against Jerusalem, and “ besieged Jerusalem, and took it, and carried away the king, and all the nobles, and the great men, and officers, and ten thousand captives to Babylon, with all the treasure of the house of the Lord, and the treasure

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of the king's house; and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold, which Solomon had made for the temple," 2 Kings xxiv. 10—16.

ELEVEN years after this event, in the reign of Zedekiah, Nebuzar-adan, the Babylonian general, came and sacked and burnt Jerusalem, and the temple, and carried away the remainder of the sacred vessels, together with all the Jews who remained in the country, captives into Babylon: except some poor people whom he left to till the land, 2 Kings xxv. 8. And four years after this, which is reckoned the twenty-third of the Babylonish captivity, Nebuzar-adan again invaded the land of Israel, and seized upon all the Jews he could meet with, and sent them captive to Babylon, Jer. lli. 30. This was done, probably, in revenge for the murder of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had made governor of the Land; but whom Ishmael killed, Jer. xli. 2. Upon the murder of Gedaliah, Johanan, the son of Ka-reah, and many of the people, that were left, fled into Egypt for fear of the king of Babylon; (ver. 16—18, and chap. xlivi. 4—7.) so that all the Jews that Nebuzar-adan now found, and made captive, amounted to no more than seven hundred and fifty persons. Thus was the captivity of Judah compleated, and the land made desolate; being entirely deprived of its former inhabitants.

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“THE sin of Judah,” saith the prophet Jeremiah, “is written with a pen of iron, and with a point of a diamond; it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance, and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee, and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not; for ye have kindled a fire in my anger which shall burn for ever.” Jer. xvii. 1—4.

THUS it was that the prophet Jeremiah addressed Judah in the name of the Lord, and foretold, and lamented their approaching captivity; but most of all lamented their sin that had kindled a fire that could not be quenched. He then added, by way of improving the melancholy subject, these words :

“THUS saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in men, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trust-

eth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

ON the whole, can we forbear recollecting the affecting words of another prophet, who, with an eye to these events, said, " My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein : and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ? And now go to ; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard ; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up : and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste : it shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns : I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of

hosts

hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry!" Is. v. 1—7.

IT may be proper to observe, that, though the captivity of Israel, and Judah, mentioned above, had different beginnings, the captivity of Israel commencing an hundred years before the captivity of Judah, yet they both ended together. For when Cyrus, the king of Persia, had conquered both the Chaldeans and Assyrians, and obtained universal monarchy, he issued out a decree for restoring the Jews to their own land, and for rebuilding Jerusalem, and the temple; as was foretold he should, one hundred and forty years before the temple was destroyed, and two hundred years before he was born, in the prophecy of Isaiah. See chap. xliv. 28. xlv. 1—4.

WHEN Cyrus issued out this decree, (which is mentioned, Ezra i. 1—4.) the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, assembled out of the several provinces of the kingdom of Babylon, and put themselves under the conduct of Zerubbabel, the grandson of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, who was made their governor; and of Joshua the high-priest, to the number of forty-nine thousand six hundred and ninety-seven persons, and returned to their own land. And though the ten tribes, in their national

national capacity, were never restored, yet as the decree of Cyrus extended to all the Jews, many persons who belonged to the ten tribes, now joined themselves to Judah and Benjamin, and returned with them to their own land.

ABOUT eighty years from their first return, Ezra, a descendant from Seraiah the high-priest, and who, on account of his great learning in the law of the Lord, was called the Scribe, obtained an ample commission from Artaxerxes for his return to Jerusalem; with as many of his own nation as were willing to return with him to the holy city. This favour, which Dr. Prideaux supposes was granted to Ezra by the interest of Esther, brought many of the captives back again to Jerusalem; over whom, it is thought, Ezra was governor for thirteen years. But still, it appears, at the time of Haman's conspiracy, which is thought to have been four or five years after the second return under Ezra, there was a multitude of Jews dispersed through the various provinces of the Persian empire; besides those who had mingled with idolaters, and embraced their religion: so that, in a comparative view, (comparing the return of the ten tribes with those of Judah and Benjamin) it may be said, that but few of the ten tribes ever returned from their dispersion.

AFTER

AFTER Ezra, succeeded Nehemiah, who had a new commission granted him by Artaxerxes, in the twentieth year of his reign, with full authority to repair the wall of Jerusalem, and fortify it, in the same manner as it stood before it was destroyed by the Babylonians. He too, it seems, was indebted to queen Esther's interest for the favour he received from Artaxerxes ; who is said to be the same with Ahasuerus. As Nehemiah's commission superseded that of Ezra, Ezra resigned his government to Nehemiah, and employed himself in collecting and publishing a new and correct edition of the Scriptures, and in restoring the worship of God to its original purity.

THOSE Jews who returned from captivity, and settled again in their own land, were no longer divided into two kingdoms, as before, but were now, all one people, and under one government. Still, however, the form of their government was subject to various changes before "the sceptre departed from Judah, and a lawgiver from between his feet ;" for this antient, and well known prediction, was not accomplished till six hundred years after their return from the two captivities above mentioned. The principal changes that took place within that period, in the government of the Jews, (for so the remains of the Hebrew Nation were then called) were the following :

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WHEN the captives first returned to Jerusalem, Judea became a province of the Persian empire; and was tributary to the Persian monarch. But the Jews, though under tribute to him, enjoyed their own religion, and were governed by their own laws; and their governors, though they acted by virtue of a commission from the court of Persia, were, all of them, of their own nation.—This state of things, and this form of government, continued till Alexander the Great destroyed the Persian empire, and established the Grecian monarchy; when the Jews became subject to him, and, afterwards, to his successors: this event happened about two hundred years from their first return to Jerusalem.

IT is remarkable that though the Jews became subject to Alexander, yet they were not properly conquered by him, as all the neighbouring nations were; God having preserved them from the horror of this conqueror's sword, by a special and very extraordinary providence; which is related by Josephus, and, from him, by Bishop Newton, Dr. Jennings, and other writers of reputation. Dr. Jennings's account I shall transcribe.

HE informs us, on the authority mentioned above, that, when Alexander was engaged in the siege of Tyre, he sent to Jaddua, the Jewish High-Priest, for auxiliary troops, and necessaries for his army. Jaddua excused himself, alledging his oath

oath to Darius. Alexander being greatly incensed, resolved to take a severe revenge. As soon, therefore, as he had made himself master of Tyre, and of Gaza, he marched against Jerusalem. Jaddua, in his pontifical robes, accompanied by the other priests, in their proper habits, went out, by divine direction, in solemn procession to meet Alexander. As soon as the king saw him, he hastened towards him, and bowed down to him with a religious veneration of that sacred name, which was inscribed on the golden fillet round his tiara. While all stood amazed at this extraordinary behaviour, Parmenio alone ventured to enquire of him, why he, who was adored by all, should himself pay such devotion to the Jewish High-Priest ? He replied, he did not pay it to the High-Priest, but to the God whose Priest he was ; for that when he was at Dio in Macedonia, and was deliberating how he should carry on the war against the Persians, this very person, in the very habit he now wore, appeared to him in a dream, and encouraged him to pass over into Asia ; assuring him, that God would give him the Persian Empire. Having said this, Alexander gave his hand to Jaddua, and entered Jerusalem with him in a very friendly manner, and under his direction, offered sacrifices to God in the temple. Here Jaddua shewed him the prophecy of Daniel, which

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predicted the overthrow of the Persian Empire by a Grecian King. At which he was so pleased, that he ordered the Jews to request whatever was agreeable to them. Upon this, Jaddua petitioned that they might enjoy their own laws and religion, and be excused from paying tribute every seventh year, because in that year they neither sowed nor reaped. All which he freely granted.

‘ **SOME** persons have rejected this account as fabulous, particularly Van Dale, Mr. Moyle, and Collins, who says that *it is an entire fiction, unsupported, and inconsistent with history and chronology, and romantic in its circumstances.* But Bishop Lloyd, Dean Prideaux, Bishop Chandler and others have sufficiently vindicated the truth of the story. Even Bayle himself, who was never thought to be over-credulous, admits the fact: and it must be said, though some things are extraordinary, yet there is nothing incredible in the whole relation.’

‘ **ALEXANDER** lay seven months at the siege of Tyre: in that time he might well want provisions for his army: and it is no wonder that he should send for some into Judea, when the Tyrians themselves used to be supplied from thence. (1 Kings v. 9—11. Ezek. xxvii. 17. Acts xii. 20.) The fidelity of the Jews to Darius, and their regard to their oath, was nothing more than they

they practised upon other occasions ; for the same reason they would not submit to Ptolemy, having taken an oath to another governor : and Ptolemy afterwards rewarded them for it in Egypt, and committed the most important garrisons and places of trust to their keeping, thinking that he might safely rely upon them, who had proved themselves so steady and faithful to their former princes and governors, and particularly to Darius king of Persia. That Alexander was in Judea, I think we may collect from other authors. Arrian says, that he subdued all that part of Syria which was called Palestine. Pliny affirms, that the balsam-tree, which grew only in Judea, was cut and bled a certain quantity in a day, while Alexander was waging war in those parts. Justin informs us, that he went into Syria, where many princes of the east met him with their mitres ; upon which passage the note of Isaac Vossius is very just and pertinent, *I think that Justin had respect to that memorable history, which Josephus relates of Jaddua the high-priest of the Jews.* If Alexander therefore came into Judea, as he certainly did, it was prudent in the Jews, though they refused to succour him at a distance, yet to submit to him upon his nearer approach ; it was in vain to withstand the conqueror, and the terror of his name was now become very great by his victories, and especially

after the dreadful execution that he had made at Tyre and at Gaza. While Alexander was at Jerusalem, it was natural enough for the high-priest to show him the prophecies of a king of Grecia overcoming the king of Persia. Nothing could be devised more likely to engage his attention, to confirm his hopes, and to conciliate his favour to the whole nation. And for his sacrificing in the temple, it is no more than other heathen princes have done, it is no more than he did in other places. He might perhaps consider God as a local deity, and offer sacrifices to him at Jerusalem, as he did to Hercules at Tyre, to Jupiter Hammon in Egypt, and to Belus in Babylon.'

THUS Bishop Newton, whose words I have transcribed in the two last paragraphs, makes the extraordinary story of Alexander's paying so much reverence to the Jewish high-priest, and such particular respect to that people, to be at least probable; and, from the 41st to the 47th page, of the second volume of his judicious Dissertations on the Prophecies, he attempts to remove the most formidable objections that have been made against it; and indeed, if a story so remarkable, had not been well supported, I would not have mentioned it to you; nor could I think it my duty to relate it, even in an appendix, without informing you on what ground it had engaged my attention,

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leaving you to judge for yourself how far it is deserving of yours.

AFTER the death of Alexander, the Jews were subject and tributary to the kings of Egypt and of Syria, as, by various turns of providence, one or the other extended their dominions and power into those parts. The former were called Lagii, or Lagides, from Lagus, the father of Ptolemy the first; the latter, Seleucii, or Seleucides, from Seleucus Nicanor, king of Syria.

AT length, they were miserably persecuted and distressed by Antiochus Epiphanes, the eighth of the Seleucian kings, one hundred and seventy years before Christ.—About that time, he laid siege to Jerusalem and took it by storm; and, in two days, it is said, this wretch massacred forty thousand of its inhabitants, and sold as many more to the neighbouring nations, for slaves. Cruelty, and a contempt of all that was sacred, appeared in the whole of his conduct towards the Jews. He impiously forced himself not only into the temple, but also into the holy of holies. He sacrificed a great sow upon the altar of burnt offerings, (which, as a vicious and unclean creature, was a striking emblem of himself) and not content with this act of impiety, he caused broth to be made of some part of the swine's flesh, and to be sprinkled all over the temple. He afterwards plundered the

sacred edifice of all its golden and silver vessels, to the value of eighteen hundred talents of gold ; and having plundered the city as well as the temple, he left it ; but not till he had appointed Philip a Phrygian, who was a man of a cruel and barbarous temper, to govern those who had escaped the fury of his indignation.

THE Jews that were left in these deplorable circumstances, were soon taught to expect additional tribulation from this unrelenting tyrant ; for he having issued out a decree, that all nations, under his dominion, should conform to his religion, and worship the same gods, and in the same manner, that he did ; [which ridiculous, and rancorous decree, was levelled chiefly against the Jews] he sent commissioners to execute it in Judea. One of them, named Apelles, came to Modin, where dwelt Mattathias, a very honourable priest, and zealous for the law of his God. This Mattathias, with his five sons, fell upon the king's commissioner, as he was endeavouring to persuade the people to do sacrifice to idols, and slew him, and all his attendants. After which, Mattathias retired into the mountains ; whither many of the Jews following him, they formed an army, and stood upon their defence. At length, they ventured to leave their fastnesses ; on which, they went about the country destroying the heathen

altars, and idolaters, and restoring the worship of God according to his law, wherever they came.

MATTATHIAS, who was aged, died the next year after he had performed these exploits ; and was succeeded in the command of the army by his son Judas ; who was called Judas Maccabæus ; and those who sided with him, and fought under his standard, were called Maccabees ; which afterwards became a general name for all such as suffered, among the Jews, in the cause of true religion, under the Egyptian, or Syrian kings.

As for Antiochus, who had so much distressed the Jews, Josephus informs us, that, as he was marching through the upper provinces of his kingdom, he heard there was a city in Persia, very wealthy, named Elymais, where there was a very magnificent and rich temple, dedicated to Diana, full of arms, and breast-plates ; said to be left there by Alexander. Spurred on by this account, he hastened his march thither, and approaching the city with his army, laid a formal siege to it. But the inhabitants, neither terrified at his coming, nor at his besieging them, resolutely defended themselves ; which disappointed him of his expectations. For having repulsed him from the town, they made a sudden and vigorous sally upon his men, whom they pursued, forcing them to withdraw into Babylon with the loss of great part of

his army. Antiochus was not only vexed at this ill success, but was also told, that his generals were defeated whom he had sent to engage the Jews, whose forces were considerably increased. The report of this fresh misfortune, added to the former, caused a vast uneasiness in his mind, and brought on him an illness, under which he languished till he died. When his pains increased, and the awful hour of death approached, he called his friends to him, and declared his decease must be very afflicting to them, acknowledging, that he thus suffered for the unjust treatment he had given the Jewish nation, by rifling their temples and contemning their God: after which words, it is said, he gave up the ghost.

THE Jews enjoyed their liberty under a Succession of the Asmonæan princes, or under the government of the Maccabees, (for Mattathias, of whom we spake just now, was the great grandson of Asmonæus) almost a hundred years; but not without frequent wars and confusions. At length, they fell out among themselves; for, Aristobulus endeavouring to wrest the crown from his elder brother Hyrcanus, a civil war ensued; which gave the Romans an opportunity to conquer Judea, and to reduce it into the form, first, of a tributary kingdom; and, afterwards, of a Roman province.—The Jews being thus subject

subject to the Romans, (the time being come when they, as iron, were to break in pieces, and to subdue all before them) the Roman emperors appointed such governors, and imposed such taxes on this unhappy people, as they thought proper.

SUCH were the revolutions that took place in the Hebrew nation before Christ came ; when, the poor remains of this once flourishing, and famous people, unhumbled by all they had suffered, and still expecting to be delivered from poverty and oppression, and to be raised to dignity and sway, were greatly offended, were highly exasperated at the conduct of our Lord. He was holy ; they were unholy. His conversation was heavenly ; theirs was earthly. What was the consequence ? They treated his miracles, his ministry, his mercy, with contempt ! In fine, “ they crucified the Lord of glory !”

“ WHAT shall we say to these things ?” You have seen a people, who, at one time, or another, were tried, almost with every form of government human and divine ; and in each you have seen the generality of them rebellious. You have seen others, of the same people, humble and thankful under every change. Is it not evident, therefore, that no change whatever in government, will long content the disobedient ; and that those

who love God, and delight to do his will, are always disposed to make the best of that which is, both in church and state ; and are thereby enabled to glorify his Name, even when others are ready to blaspheme it ?

However, when “they had taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain” the Lord’s Anointed, then, “they filled up the sins of their fathers,” and, “brought upon themselves, swift destruction.” Now “the Sceptre departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet.” Their city was utterly destroyed, and their temple entirely consumed. Eleven hundred thousand Jews perished in the dreadful siege, conducted by Titus Vespasian ; and those that escaped the united horrors of famine, pestilence, and war, were scattered abroad through the earth, and made “an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord led them ;” and they continue such, in a great measure, to this day.

I HAVE now ran through the various revolutions of the Hebrew Nation, from the death of Joshua to the death of Jesus. In forming this Appendix, I have been most indebted to Dr. Jennings’s Jewish Antiquities ; a considerable part of the Appendix being transcribed from the first volume of that valuable work : but, as I have taken

taken the liberty to make such additions and alterations, in what I have cited from the Doctor, as seemed best to answer the design I had in view, I have not attempted to distinguish his words from mine. I wish you to read him yourself, not only with a view to see how far I am indebted to him, but to profit by what he has written on Jewish affairs. But as you have not opportunity to do this, at present, and as you wish to read the Bible with understanding, it may not be amiss to remind you, that, carefully to distinguish between the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the Jews, will afford you some assistance; and, the better to enable you to do this, I shall close this Appendix with the following remarks.

IN the Hebrew commonwealth, every city had its elders, who formed a court of judicature, with a power of determining lesser matters in their respective districts. The Rabbies say, there were three such elders or judges, in each lesser city, and twenty-three in greater. But Josephus speaks of seven judges in each, without any such distinction of greater or less.—Siganus supposes, these elders and judges of cities were originally constituted in the wilderness by Moses, upon the advice which Jethro gave him; and continued by divine appointment, after the settlement in the land of Canaan. Whereas others imagine the Jethronian

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prefecture was a peculiar constitution, suited to their condition while they encamped in the wilderness ; but laid aside after they came into Canaan. However that be, it is certain there was a court of judges and officers appointed in every city by the law of Moses, Deut. xvi. 18. How far, and in what respects these judges differed from the elders of the city, is not easily determined ; and whether they were different persons or the same. Perhaps, the title, Elders, may denote their seniority and dignity ; and that of Judges, the office they sustained.

THE lower courts of justice, in their several cities, were held in their gates, Deut. xvi. 18. But besides these, each Tribe had its respective Prince. They are called heads of the thousands of Israel, Numb. x. 4. and were the same, perhaps, with the twelve captains of the host, mentioned in the second chapter of Numbers ; and their office, therefore, related chiefly, if not entirely, to military affairs.

WE read also of the Princes of the congregation who presided in judiciary matters, Numbers xxxii. 2. which some apprehend to be the grand council of the nation, called the Sanhedrim ; to which, not only inferior courts, but even their Kings, and High-Priests, in some cases, were subject. But others conceive the institution of

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the seventy elders was only temporary, for the assistance of Moses in the government, before the settlement in the land of Canaan ; and that the Sanhedrim was first set up in the time of the Maccabees. The arguments on both sides the question, you may see in Jennings's Jewish Antiquities, page 39—42.

THEIR ecclesiastical affairs were managed by the Priests and Levites ; with their attendants, or inferior officers. The High Priest was always considered as the chief officer in the Jewish church, and was frequently consulted respecting the affairs of the state ; and, occasionally, other officers of the church, were also consulted. The "Urim and Thummim," as well as "the breast plate of judgment," were with the High Priest ; who, if he was an aged man, was always supposed to be better acquainted with the law than any other person. And it should be remembered, that when the Synagogues were used as consistories of public justice, (for they were originally erected to be consistories of justice as well as places of instruction and devotion) the causes that were decided in them pertained to the church, not to the state ; and were, therefore, brought before the Priests, and Levites, and not before the Elders of the people.

THESE different courts of justice, are plainly and frequently distinguished both in the Old and

New

New Testament. In Deuteronomy (xvii. 12) it is said, “ The man who will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the Priest, or unto the Judge, even that man shall die :” that is, I apprehend, he who would not hearken to the Priest, in matters of a moral, or ceremonial nature ; or to the Judge, in matters that were civil, or criminal, was to be put to death, according as the law in such a case directed. The same distinction between the civil and sacred courts of justice, and the judges who presided in each, is observable in the xixth chapter, of the second book of Chronicles. We read in that chapter of the reformation which Jehoshaphat made in Judah ; and are informed that he “ appointed Judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city ;” who appear to be secular Judges appointed to determine criminal causes ; and besides these, at Jerusalem, he appointed, what some have called ‘ a spiritual court ;’ which consisted “ of Priests and Levites, and of the Fathers in Israel ;” in this court, matters of an ecclesiastical nature were tried, and determined ; in which, for the Lord, Amariah, the High-Priest, was chief ; and in the former, Zebadiah was chief, for the king.—Reformation, when real, is a turning back from the error of our ways, and putting things, as far as possible, upon the same footing
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they were before any revolted from that which was right in church or state. From Jehoshaphat's reformation, we may, therefore, form some idea how matters were originally settled in the Hebrew nation.

IN the case of Jeremiah, the civil and ecclesiastical courts of justice, appear not only to have been distinct, but divided; for by the consistory of the Priests, he was condemned to die; but by the consistory of the Princes, or secular Judges, sitting in the gate, he was absolved, and discharged, Jer. xxvi. 8. But in the trial of Jesus Christ, these courts (which continued to be as distinct as the state of the nation would then admit) were united. "The chief Priests and Elders," it is said, "came unto him, while he was teaching, and said, By what authority dost thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" And two days before our Redeemer ate his last passover, these heads of houses "assembled together, unto the palace of the High Priest, called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him;" or, in other words, that they might find, or make him guilty, in one or both the courts of justice in which they presided as judges, and so, in appearance at least, condemn him to die according to their law. Thus did these Rulers, both in church and state, "take counsel together against

against the Lord, and against his Anointed." And our Lord expressly foretold his Apostles, that what they had done to him, they would also do to them. "Behold," said he, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the Councils, and they will scourge you in their Synagogues:" and every one knows, that this prediction has been abundantly fulfilled.

THE Rulers I have mentioned were the fixed and ordinary officers in the Hebrew nation. But when they grew remiss in their duty, or the people remarkably disobedient, which too frequently happened, it pleased God to raise up Prophets to "Cry aloud and spare not, but to lift up their voice like a trumpet, to shew unto his people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." They also foretold, with remarkable exactness, what calamities their iniquities would bring upon the nation; when the particular judgments they had predicted would approach, and how long they would continue. Nor was the national evil afterwards committed by the Jews in rejecting, and crucifying the promised Messiah; or the judgments that followed, hidden from them; no, all this they saw, and declared with such precision, that what they have said on this subject, might well pass for a history of the Jewish nation,

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had we not indubitable evidences of its being prophecy.—On the other hand, to the penitent, “who believed and trembled at the word of God,” the Prophets were the extraordinary messengers of “good news and glad tidings.” They were both commanded, and “anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God” on all their enemies: thus they comforted “them that mourned in Zion.”—The particular deliverances which they promised in the Name of the Lord, they not only foretold when they should be accomplished, but by whom, and to what end they would be granted. In making these declarations, they were frequently, nay, almost continually led to say more or less of our common bondage by sin, and of “the common salvation” from sin, by Jesus Christ. “For to him give all the Prophets witness, that through his Name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins.”

MAY you, my Son, never forget to what purpose the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, and the miracles performed by him, with the doctrine which he taught, are recorded in the Scripture! “These things,” says John the Evangelist, “are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the

Son of God, and that believing ye might have life thro' his Name."—We may conclude, therefore, that prophecy and miracles are two of the main pillars on which the credibility of revelation rests; that faith rests on it, and revelation itself, on the Lord; who, by the same Evangelist, hath assured us, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

T H E E N D.

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E R R A T A.

In the Title-Page, read M.DCC.LXXVIII.

In the *Letters*, p. 17. l. 11. for deserts read desarts ; and wherever the same word occurs, in the same sense—p. 21. l. 21. for Jabok read Jabbok—p. 33. l. 11. dele the of—p. 44. l. 11. for disapprove read disapproves—p. 47. l. 2. for since read before—p. 54. l. 15. for came read come—p. 60. l. 14. for Lord read and Lord—p. 62. (Running-Title) for Caaann read Canaan—p. 68. l. 25. for temoved read removed—p. 84. l. 16. for censor read censer—p. 85. l. 11. for Num. X. read Lev. X.—p. 91. l. 17. for xith read xth of Numbers—p. 100. ult. for were read was—p. 106. l. 24. for &heir read there—p. 119. l. 6. for reprepresented read represented—p. 120. l. 9. for shall read shalt—p. 143. l. 10. for Zelophehad's read Zelophehad's—p. 154. l. 14. for Sion read Sihon—p. 179. l. 14. for Makedah read Makkedah—p. 208. l. 8. for twenty-first read thirty-fifth—p. 210. l. 14. for privilege read privileges—p. 238. l. 21. for person read persons—p. 276. l. 11. for kingdom read kingdoms.

In the *Appendix*, p. 279. l. 23. for Jehoiakim read Jehoiakin.